INTERVIEW L22-SG5: LAUREN KANE

Interviewer: Dr Fearghus Roulston
Interviewee: Lauren Kane
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Location: Virtual
Transcriber: Naomi Wells

Textual Note: Annotations and observations appear in square brackets (e.g. [pauses], [laughs]). Partial, interrupted or unfinished utterances are denoted by a dash. False starts, filler words and non-lexical utterances (e.g. 'um', 'hmm') are not generally transcribed. Time codes appear at ten-minute intervals in square brackets in bold type.

FR: There we go, that should be recording now, so the first thing is, if you could just say your name and today's date.

LK: I'm Lauren Kane and it's the sixth of February 2021.

FR: Okay, thank you, and, sorry [laughs], I'm having a recording issue, but I think it's fine.

LK: [laughs] That's alright, don't worry.

FR: So I've sent you over a consent form, but if you could just kind of verbally say that you know that this is being recorded.

LK: Yeah, yeah, so I know this is recorded, it's fine, yeah.

FR: Yeah, great. Okay, so the, if you need to take a break or anything at any point just let me know, that's fine and we can pause the recording. So the interview's going to be like a life history interview, so it's kind of broadly chronological, but obviously conversations don't always work like that, so it might not be.

LK: Yeah, yeah.

FR: That's fine, and there's going to be some questions I suppose about your family because it's second generation. I'm just going to try to put in a different pair of headphones cos I feel like the sound is coming out of my laptop, which is perhaps not what it should be doing, so just give me two seconds [laughs]. Can you say something?

LK: Yeah, hi.

FR: Hmm.

LK: That okay?

FR: I'm just, it's kind of coming out of my spea-, oh hold on, here we go, say something else [laughs].

LK: [laughs] It's always the, yeah, is that alright?

FR: Here we go, we're flying now, that's us, yeah, sorry.

LK: It's okay.

FR: Bit of a hassle having to do this remotely [laughs].

LK: Yeah, I imagine [laughs].

FR: Yeah, okay, I think that should be us good to go now, so just to start then, I had a look at your email, so if you could tell me where and when you were born?

LK: So I was born in 1991 in Swansea in Wales, yeah.

FR: And are both your parents from Northern Ireland or, or just one of them?

LK: So just my dad. My mum's from Croydon in England.

FR: Okay, okay, but, but she was living in Wales at that point with your dad–

LK: Yeah, so my dad was a, was the minister, so they moved around the UK quite a lot, so they were in Wales then, when I was born, but it wasn't for very long, it was about a year or so.

FR: And do you, so you don't have any memories of Wales really?

LK: No, not really, yeah, no, I was very small [laughs].

FR: And do you have any brothers or sisters?

LK: I've got one sister who's a year and a half younger than me.

FR: Okay, so your dad's from Northern Ireland?

LK: Yeah, so he was born in Knockbracken, so just outside of Belfast. I think he stayed around there pretty much his whole life until he moved over to England to go to Bible college, and that was where he met my mum and then he stayed.

FR: So he met your mum at Bible college?

LK: Yeah.

FR: That's interesting, do you know how they–?

LK: Yeah, so that was in, that was [laughs], so my mum was in the year below him and the story of like, the first time they really met each other was, it was my dad's twenty-second birthday and his friends had tied him to a tree and painted [indecipherable] his chest in white, in white gloss, in the woods and had this bucket of dirty water, and just saw them [laughs] pranking him and ran over and threw the bucket of water over him, so [laughs]–

FR: Wow.

LK: And then they fell in love [laughs] the.

FR: [laughs] What a, what a story, what a, what a first meeting.

LK: Yeah [laughs].

FR: So was your mum also a student at the college?

LK: Yeah, she was, she didn't finish, so whenever, cos my dad being a year ahead, a year above, he then became a pastor and they got married at that point and moved around, so she didn't finish her degree there, but.

FR: Okay, and where did you move to after, after Wales?

LK: So then we moved to Great Yarmouth and that was when my sister was born.

FR: Where in, where in England is that?

LK: And then, it's on, it's in Norfolk, so east coast, east-south, south-eastish.

FR: Yeah [laughs].

LK: [laughs] And we weren't there for very long either I don't think, that was maybe a year or two, as well, and then, and then they moved to Romford, which is in Essex, again not for very long [laughs], so my, between about the ages of, from being born and five we moved around quite a lot, so then there was a ti-, so my dad would get given churches to go to and move to, there was about a six-month period when I was, yeah, when I was five where they didn't have a church for him to go to, so he moved back in with my mum's parents in Croydon and then from there we moved, that was, yeah, that was for like, six months and then we moved to Birmingham until I was eleven and then we moved to Croydon and we've been in Croydon ever since.

FR: Okay, so until you were five quite a lot of moving around, and then Birmingham with a brief period in Croydon and then, so Croydon since then, okay.

LK: Yeah.

FR: So I don't, what, what specifically is your dad a pastor, what's the church, what's the denomination?

LK: So, sorry [coughs], it was the Elim churches, they're like Pentecostal churches.

FR: Ah yeah, I know, yeah, there's an Elim church in the town where I'm from actually, in Northern Ireland.

LK: Right, okay.

FR: Yeah.

LK: Yeah.

FR: Okay.

LK: Yeah, so he, he was with them for quite a while. My dad's got MS, so he's stopped being a pastor quite a few years ago now, he's quite unwell, but.

FR: I'm sorry to hear, I'm sorry to hear that.

LK: That's alright.

FR: But it sounds like it must be, it's quite a strange life in some ways, the idea that you're given a church–

LK: Yeah, no, it's–

FR: And then you move and then you're given a church and then you move again.

LK: Yeah, yeah.

FR: What was that like for–?

LK: No, it is, it is quite weird.

FR: Yeah, and what was that like for you, you must've–?

LK: I think cos I was so young it was just normal and that's what we did [coughs], so, can I just get a drink for a second [laughs]?

FR: Yeah [laughs], go ahead, go ahead.

LK: Alright [extended pause].

LK: Sorry [laughs].

FR: That's alright.

LK: Yeah, so it was, yeah, cos I was, most of the moving around was before I was five, it just didn't faze us, the move from Birmingham to Croydon was quite [laughs], I remember being quite upset about that at the time, but then that would be cos I was eleven and I had all my friends that I'd then miss and it was–

FR: You get a bit more settled.

LK: Quite a big move.

FR: Yeah, you get a bit more settled at that age I suppose because you're at school and stuff like that.

LK: Yeah.

FR: So what age, what age were you when you, when yous, when you first moved to Birmingham, six or seven?

LK: It was, I would have been, it was the last term of reception cos I managed to do a different school for each term of reception [laughs]–

FR: Wow [laughs].

LK: Which was crazy [laughs].

FR: Yeah.

LK: So yeah, I would have been about five or six.

FR: And, and what were your impressions of Birmingham, what did you make of Birmingham?

LK: Well, like, me and my sister were really excited cos the, so when you're a pastor you get given a manse, so the house, you don't get a choice in what house you move into, so up until then we'd had tiny little flats and really small houses, so me and my sister had said oh we really want a toy room [laughs], and my mum was like, sure, that'll happen, but the manse in Birmingham was huge, this big Victorian house with like, two, it had two reception rooms, so we could have one of the rooms [laughs] for all our toys and stuff, so we, we were really excited about it. The area, so we moved to Smethwick, which is quite a rough area of Croydon, of Birmingham really, but it just, it, because being, were there from our whole, pretty much most of primary school it was kind of like what we were used to and [laughs] we did, I don't think we quite realised how rough it was until we moved to Croydon again and I remember like, I went to quite, it was a, I had gone to, I'd **[0010:00]** done year seven in Birmingham at quite a rough school and then we moved to Croydon and it was, I just remember coming home after the first day and going the fights are rubbish [laughs], they don't, no one fights in the same way, everyone's just a bit of a wet blanket [laughs].

FR: [laughs] So a big change.

LK: So that was quite a big change, yeah.

FR: But yeah, I guess, as you say, when you've got nothing to compare it to, you, it's just normal.

LK: Yeah, that was just how life was and, yeah.

FR: Yeah, and I find that idea about being given a house really interesting, cos of course that's true, you get given a manse, as you say, and that's, you don't really get a choice I guess.

LK: Yeah, yeah.

FR: But, but a big one in Birmingham with a reception room and a toy room [laughs].

LK: Yeah, yeah [laughs].

FR: And so would your mum have, have just kind of been, have worked in the house or did she have a job or–?

LK: So the pay for being a pas-, an Elim pastor was barely anything, so while we were very young and not at school she was just looking after us, but then she had quite a few different jobs where she could, so, she did, she was a youth worker for a while, she worked in a bakery for a few hours every now and again, different jobs, and then when I was nineish, I think, she went back to university and did a degree in religious studies and did a PGSE and became a teacher, so yeah.

FR: Okay, that's interesting, so–

LK: So then, so yeah, so she started teaching when I was eleven, cos we had the thing of we were going to big school [laughs] both of us for the first time on the, on the same day for her, so when she started was when I was starting high school [laughs], yeah.

FR: So you were both starting, yeah, that's fine.

LK: Yeah.

FR: And what about the church then? So presumably you would have gone to the church as well, or maybe not, I don't know.

LK: Yeah, so it was, yeah, we went all the time and it was quite, it was quite like having another family, so all the, all, there was quite a lot of old Jamaican ladies that went to the church, it was always like, having all these, they'd always make you call them auntie and always got Christmas presents and Easter eggs and always slipped you some sweets when

you were at church and stuff, so it was quite nice, yeah, it was nice, it was, you felt like you had a big community around you.

FR: I think that's, there's something really interesting, specifically about the kind of Pentecostal evangelical churches because it's a big migrant community a lot of the time.

LK: Yeah.

FR: Northern Irish migrants, but also–

LK: Yeah, so they had a few, yeah.

FR: Go on.

LK: I think cos of the area we were in as well was quite a lot of migrants, it was a big Jamaican population, there was quite a few Indian and Sri Lankan people that went to the church as well. We had a lot, we would also take in lodgers quite a lot, so missionaries that were coming over or just, I don't know where they found them [laughs], heard about people, cos we had such a big house there was, the attic had been converted at some point, so there was two rooms up there and we'd quite often have people staying with us from all over the world really, so yeah, I felt like I was exp-, I was exposed to a lot of cultures [laughs] growing up.

FR: Yeah, it sounds like quite a multicultural childhood and obviously Birmingham's a very multicultural city just anyway.

LK: Yeah.

FR: Yeah, but, so a kind of a community thing around the church?

LK: Yeah, yeah, yeah, there was times where I would be like, oh do we have to go to church again, but I think as, any child pushes back against stuff like that eventually if you're having to do it all the time, but no, it was good, I enjoyed it.

FR: Yeah, any other Irish or Northern Irish people at the, at the church in Birmingham?

LK: I don't think there was actually.

FR: That's interesting.

LK: No.

FR: And so would your dad have talked to you about Northern Ireland?

LK: See I was thinking about this [indecipherable], I was saying to my partner, I was like, I don't really know how much I actually know about [laughs] the Troubles and stuff, it was, it was, so my granny from Ireland would come over every summer and, yeah, so no, he would

talk about things that go on, but it was more stories from him growing up and like, throwing cowpats at each other in the fields [laughs] after school and things like that, it wasn't, they never really brought up any, any things about the Troubles that much really. We'd go and visit family every now and again as well, over in Northern Ireland. I don't know how often we'd go really, well, my granny would come over every summer and stay for a few weeks with us, yeah, maybe we'd go once a year, once every two years to visit family over there.

FR: And this would be just outside of Belfast where your dad's from, where you would stay?

LK: Yeah, so we'd stay with them, occas-, so my mum would then want to do like, tourismy things [laughs], so, so then, then we would like, go, there was a, my mum was into collecting Belleek pottery as well, so I remember there was one holiday we went and stayed, I can't remember where it is that the factory is, but we stayed round there in a family's caravan, or a friend of the family or someone, yeah, so we would go, we would go round Northern Ireland a bit, but mostly we would just visit family around Belfast, Lisburn sort of area.

FR: And what did you, what did you make of Northern Ireland, did it seem different, or was it all, it is different from Birmingham in lots of ways I guess?

LK: Yeah, yeah, no, totally, so it was very white and very, everyone was way friendlier, that was, that was, we would always laugh as well when my granny came over cos she'd have to go and get the, her pension from the post office each week, so I remember my dad, again, it wasn't a nice area, so there was my granny, my dad went, she'd gone out and she hadn't come back for a while, my dad found her just sat on a bench chatting to some random person and my dad was like, you need to be careful, you've got a bag full of money and you're just talking to random strangers, it's [laughs], it's not like Northern Ireland round here, you need to [laughs] be careful, but she was just happy to talk to anyone [laughs].

FR: [laughs] So that's kind of a positive difference I guess or like, a nice difference, the kind of friendliness.

LK: Yeah, yeah, yeah, there was always, there was a few things I was thinking about specifically with the Troubles and stuff. My dad was always very wary about going into the Catholic areas, so if it was with my, with my mum wanting to, I think we went to Londonderry once and, yeah, we went to Londonderry once and I was wearing, like you would in the 2000s as a teenager, a T-shirt that had a heart on the front with a Union Jack on the heart, and I remember being on the wall [laughs], being on the wall and just like, doing touristy stuff and my dad saying to me you need to zip that cardigan up because they'll use that heart as target practice [laughs], and like, it freaked me out as a kid [laughs], but it was things like that, and then my mum would be like, oh don't be stupid, it's fine, but he was very cautious about it.

FR: And that sense I guess that symbols or whatever mean something different in Northern Ireland than they do in England.

LK: Yeah, yeah.

FR: But that's interesting that he was still cautious about it, both as someone who didn't live there, but also into the nineties and after the peace process and–

LK: Two thou-, yeah, it would have been in the two thou-, early 2000s I think, or maybe late nineties, but yeah, he was st-, he was still worried about it.

FR: And was he–?

LK: And my–

FR: Go ahead.

LK: I was g-, I was going to say my mum's parents did eventually, so after they retired they, they retired and got new jobs, so they started working for, for, it was a Christian organisation called Sands, who run cafés and Bible groups and stuff on army bases.

FR: Oh interesting.

LK: So they were, yeah, so they were in Pirbright in England for a while and then they got stationed to Londonderry, so they actually lived there for a year and we went to [laughs], we went to visit them, so we, yeah, that was something, we would have been around Londonderry then and it was always, dad would be like, what's going on, why are you doing that, it's really dangerous [laughs], so yeah, it was quite interesting seeing the two, the two sides of what they thought about it.

FR: No, absolutely, and would your dad have been from a, from a Protestant or Presbyterian family or were they an Elim family, do you know what I mean?

LK: No, so they were, they were, they were Presbyterian I think.

FR: Yeah, cos there's a kind of a cross-, I mean, it's, **[00:20:00]** it's a bit co-, it's a bit complicated I know, but there's, certainly in the town, I'm from Ballymena in north Antrim, and, and there's an Elim church there, as well as lots of Presbyterian churches, and there's a bit of kind of crossover I guess.

LK: Yeah, I think there was, there was two brothers that started, or something that started Elim church, and then one of them broke off or, oh I don't know, but I think that was what happened.

FR: But, so your dad, your, your dad was from like, a Presbyterian Protestant family–

LK: Yeah.

FR: Yeah, and he, he converted to Elim himself?

LK: Yeah, yeah.

FR: And still a little bit kind of cautious about Catholic parts of Northern Ireland?

LK: Yeah, yeah.

FR: And would he have talked about politics with you at all? Would you have had any kind of sense of the politics of Northern Ireland or not really?

LK: No, he didn't, he didn't, which thinking about it now I'm like, that's a bit weird [laughs], but it just was never really brought up, yeah, no, or we, I was, I was telling my mum that I was doing this, cos I was like, let me check the dates of when they met and when he moved and stuff, but we were both, we were both just laughing, we were like, well, all that they ever really got brought up was just like, casual racist [laughs], don't trust the Catholics, their eyes are too close together and that kind of stuff, but interestingly, my cousin, one of my Northern Irish cousins, got married to a Catholic girl and then as soon as that happened any rudeness they would say about Catholics got changed over to rudeness about Irish Travellers, so [laughs] it was, it was bizarre, but it was like, oh you have to be careful what we're saying now [laughs] cos we've got a Catholic girl in the family, but yeah.

FR: Well, it's, it's, I, I suppose it's nice that [laughs], that it changed, not so nice for the Travellers.

LK: Yeah.

FR: What was I going to say, and then I, I guess it's not that strange in some ways like, you're maybe, why would your dad talk to you about politics I suppose, it's not, but, but no, it's, it's interesting. I suppose I'm thinking about, so as, when you were a kid like, in Birmingham, did you have a sense of your dad as having a different accent than you? Did you sort of think of yourself, for example, as the children of migrants given that you were probably meeting a lot of migrants in Birmingham?

LK: Yes, so my dad's accent, if he, if he goes back to Northern Ireland or if he's on the phone to his sisters it gets really strong Northern Irish, so there was, we would always make jokes about some of the ways he would say things and what are you talking about and go on a-, going on about just ran-, every now and again we'd throw in a few random words and stuff, so, so we were always quite conscious that he was Northern Irish and he had a different accent and, yeah. One time when we were, again, it would have been when I was about ten, someone doing a survey for some research had knocked on the door and they were doing research into I think it was healthy eating in mixed race families, and this person insisted that because dad was from Northern Ireland me and my sister were then classed as mixed race [laughs], which he would, he would always be, he was very much like, no, I'm from the UK, I'm, you can't, whatever, we did the survey anyway [laughs], but it was, it was always like, aware that yes, Northern Ireland is in the UK, but you are quite, it is quite different from being in Britain really.

FR: That's interesting, it sounds like the guy needed to get his quota of surveys done [laughs].

LK: Yeah, I was like, it's not, yeah [laughs], it was strange [laughs].

FR: But it's interesting your dad, so your dad would have thought of himself as British, and so he maybe wouldn't have thought of himself really as a migrant in the sense that it's all Britain.

LK: Yeah, I don't know if he would. I got my Irish passport, whenever Brexit was happening I signed up for an Irish passport, and cos I had to ask for his birth certificate at the time he was very much like, why do you, you're not Irish, you don't [laughs], in the end he was like, okay, it's fine, if it's going to help you, if you need, I don't know, if we wanted to work somewhere in the EU or whatever he was like, okay, but there was a bit of a pushback at the time for, you're from the UK [laughs], you're British, you're not Irish.

FR: Aye, it's really interesting. Just still thinking about Birmingham I guess, do you know what the kind of pastor job entails like, what, what was his kind of day to day?

LK: Yeah, so obviously Sundays he was preaching and taking the services, there would be, he did a lot of visiting people, checking they're okay, going to, visiting people in hospital, what else would he do, there'd be like, there was quite a lot of, cos it was quite an underprivileged area they'd run a lot of youth groups and summer holiday camps for kids and stuff, so he did a lot of that, so my mum would run quite a lot of those as well, yeah, evening cell groups, things like that, so he was always quite busy getting, doing stuff.

FR: No, I, it's, it's quite a hard, it's quite a hard job I think, yeah.

LK: Yeah, yeah.

FR: And so for you, you were going to primary school I suppose in Birmingham, and you liked it?

LK: Yeah, yeah, no, I did, yeah, it was just round the corner from our house and, yeah, I loved going to school really, but yeah, it, again, it was quite, there's things that come up now and it was like, oh yeah, that wasn't the nicest of areas [laughs] that we were living in, a lot of the kids were in poverty really, but then there would be, yeah, it was just, when you look back on it and you think oh actually, at the time it was like, yeah, that's perfectly normal, go round to a friend's house and they haven't got any carpet, it's just the concrete on the floor and in their council house and stuff like that, and you just didn't think of anything of it, of it, at the time, but it was, it was, yeah, it was quite, it was a rough area [laughs].

FR: But, but you didn't feel kind of worried by that as a kid, or it didn't really bother you as much.

LK: No, that was just normal and that's how it was, yeah.

FR: And what about outside of school, did you, were you in any, any clubs, any kind of social stuff?

LK: So I, I was, so I was in the choir at Birmingham cathedral for, so I joined that at, so they came, they came to our school, I don't know why, it was very strange, they came to the primary school and did like, auditions, so that was when I was in year six, so I did a year and then I got a place and did a year of being a chorister there.

FR: That's amazing, chorister in a big cathedral, yeah.

LK: Yeah, yeah [laughs], no, it was cool and then, but then I moved back to Croydon and just didn't really, I'd do, I'd do the occasional choir at school and stuff, but not any of the fancy ones. I think by then it was kind of like, you're a teenager and you're a bit more [laughs] self-conscious, so.

FR: Yeah, I was in the choir until I was ten or something and then you sort of, it's, it's, it gets harder as you get older [laughs], so you–

LK: But yeah, so that meant I would be travelling into Birmingham on my, it was about half an hour on the bus, from Smethwick once or twice a week, but yeah, travelling in and out on my own, which was, I'm always a bit like, was I old enough [laughs] to be going around on my own, but yeah, I remember once coming home, cos I'd get back quite late and in the winter it'd then be really dark, and this random man was like, young girl, why are you out, you shouldn't be out on the streets at this time of night, but, I was fine [laughs], I was great, yeah.

FR: You were fine and your parents were fine with it as well I guess.

LK: Yeah.

FR: Yeah, Birmingham is not a city that I know very well, it's quite a big city, that's quite like, with lots of separate bits to it I suppose is how I would think of it. So would you have, you went into the city centre I guess to go to the cathedral?

LK: Yeah, it was the city centre, I was always felt a bit like it was having two different lives as well, cos everyone, everyone in the choir was majority white and quite posh, and then I'd go back to my church where, oh and my high school even, where being white was the minority and it wasn't posh [laughs], so it was quite, it was quite like living a separate life really.

FR: That's really interesting, yeah, and so you started high, high school or secondary school or whatever in Birmingham?

LK: Yeah, so I did the first year in Birmingham.

FR: Okay, and what was that like, like, that kind of move from primary school to high school or secondary school?

LK: Yeah, it was quite different, so it was quite a big school that I went to and my, although I say oh it was rough and everything, it was a, quite a small church of England primary school

that I'd been at and then I went to this quite **[00:30:00]** big secular high school, so it was quite different like, different groups of people that I was with, but I just kept my head down and made some good friends and enjoyed it really, so yeah.

FR: And then, you mentioned earlier that it's a bit jarring then to be told okay we've got to kind of up sticks and move to Croydon.

LK: Yeah.

FR: So do you remember, do you remember that, do you remember how that came about and how you felt about it [laughs]?

LK: Yeah, I don't remember being told or anything, but I guess they just said it was, you've been there long enough now it's time to move on, oh no, no, I know why we moved, we moved because my mum had been at, in her staffroom at school and said my dream job would be head of RE at this, her school that she used to go to as a teenager in Croydon, and there was a, the *TES* newspaper on the table in the staffroom and she opened it up and the job was there [laughs].

FR: Wow [laughs], wow.

LK: And she was, this was her first year of teaching as well, so it was kind of like, no way should she be then getting, for the second year becoming a head of department, but she went for it anyway and she got it, so, so that was when we moved to Croydon and, yeah, I wasn't happy about it at the time, I, I remember crying quite [laughs] a lot, to be honest, and dad at some point bought the manse from the church, so it was our house, so then, but then moving to Croydon the price difference for what you could get in Croydon was crazy, so we ended up having to, we moved into quite a small house in comparison and it wasn't how mum, it was an ex-council house and my mum's quite into old Victorian, bit of character kind of houses, so it did feel like, why are we moving to, downgrading a bit really, but we had family around, it was closer to family and, we didn't know at the time that my dad had MS yet, so he officially got diagnosed when I was fifteen or sixteen, but there had been signs for about maybe the last two years we were in Birmingham of something wasn't quite right, so I, I think at the, really it was all good timing to, my mum was then on the better wage, we had family around that could look after, help look after him and things, but yeah, no, for me as a teenager [laughs], who had just made all these new friends at high school and was fairly independent going in and out of Birmingham on my own, got choirs that were, I would get a bit of money from doing that as well and it, yeah, it was quite, it was quite rough dropping it all and moving.

FR: No, it's a big change.

LK: Yeah.

FR: It's kind of hard at that age because on the one hand you feel quite independent, but then when your parents say we've got to move–

LK: Yeah, you just have to–

FR: I mean, you can't, you can't stay [laughs], so your kind of actual independence, you suddenly realise how small it is, right?

LK: Yeah.

FR: No, that's, that's interesting and, but your, so your mum's family is from Croydon.

LK: Croydon.

FR: Right.

LK: Yeah.

FR: And you'd lived there, you said, briefly before.

LK: Yeah, so we lived with my grandparents for six monthsish, just while they were trying to find a different church for my dad, but.

FR: Okay, and then, so when you moved to Croydon your mum had this job as a religious–

LK: Yeah, so she was head of department for, as an RE teacher in school.

FR: And you said your dad had shown some signs of being ill, but he hadn't yet been diagnosed.

LK: Yeah.

FR: So did he look for a church in Croydon then or–?

LK: Yeah, so he, he had the intentions of looking for a church, cos he hadn't actually been moved t-, like, gone the right way around it of, they then give you a church or whatever, there wasn't any around, so they started attending a different, an independent sort of Pentecostally type, but they're independent, it was kind of [laughs], pinning it down to a denomination was quite hard, but they started going there and he quite quickly ended up being an elder there and preaching and doing things, but he wasn't actually employed there, so he did end up working for a good few years at a school for older disabled kids, so, well, they were young adults really, I think it was eighteen to twenty, you, he worked there as a carer helping them and stuff, which turned out to be quite useful when his mobility started slowing down and it was all, it did help him keep working for longer than he probably would have in a normal job cos the, it was all adapted already, but.

FR: That makes sense, and would you still have been going back across to Northern Ireland in this period, summers and things?

LK: I'm trying to think, so my granny st-, so my granny got dementia at some point and we stopped going as often, she also was on death's door for many, many years [laughs], so we'd, we'd often get a phone call of, she's had a heart attack, you need to come over right now, she's going to die in the next two hours and dad would zoom off and get over there and find her sat in recovery eating a wee bun [laughs], so it was kind of like, I don't know the cream cakes are helping, but [laughs], so there was a, there was a weird few years where I personally didn't go over quite often whatever really, I know my sister went over with my dad a few times, but yeah, there was a, there was a period of maybe three years or so where I think I felt quite disconnected from them because I never went over there and obviously granny wasn't in a fit state to be able to come over. My, so I've got, my dad's got two sisters, one of them has a daughter who lives in St Albans, which is north London, so she would go and visit Emma quite a lot, but never came to visit us [laughs] which was all very strange, so yeah, I think there was quite a bit of resentment of, why, why would you always visit, but not come and visit us, cos my dad also started to find it hard going over as well, but then once my gran did die, which would have been in, I think I was in second year of uni, so it was probably about 2012ish, that was the last time any of us went over to Northern Ireland and since then, cos my dad past that point was then using a wheelchair and things and it was impossible for him to go over, so my aunties now do come over and visit maybe twice a year, three times a year, twice a year, so I feel recently I've seen them a lot more than I did for that period.

FR: Okay, but, but 2012, which was your grandmother's funeral, was, was the last, was the last time you went over?

LK: Yeah, was the last time I went over, yeah.

FR: Okay, but that's interesting about the sisters.

LK: Yeah, it was bizarre, it was really bizarre, so, so that was my auntie Doreen who would be over here, but never actually come and see us, and then my auntie–

FR: But she would, she would stay with your other aunt.

LK: So she would stay with my, her daughter and visit her.

FR: Oh her daughter, right.

LK: Yeah, but we didn't, she never really ever came to see us, which we all found very strange, but she is, she's quite strange, to be honest [laughs], yeah, but yeah, no, we've seen them a lot more recently, but.

FR: And they both still live in Belfast or in Northern Ireland.

LK: Yeah, yeah, so my auntie Valerie, who's the younger sister, she, she lived in Banbridge.

FR: Oh yeah, I know Banbridge, yeah.

LK: Yeah, so she had originally, she was living in Lisburn, but she moved to Banbridge to be closer to my granny. My grandad died while my mum was pregnant with me, so I never met him.

FR: Okay, years ago, yeah.

LK: Then, so she moved into a house round the corner and then eventually my granny needed someone round more often, so my granny moved in with her and was living with my auntie Valerie for quite, quite a number of years actually.

FR: Okay, and would you be in touch with the daughter who lives in St Albans?

LK: No, I went, I think the last time I saw her was when I went to my, went to her wedding and that was years and years ago, I haven't, it's strange, I haven't seen any of that fam-, the cousins really, don't ever see them.

FR: Ah just the way it, the way it happens isn't it, in families, yeah. So after the kind of initial annoyance at having to move back to Croydon, how did you kind of settle into it, was it okay after a while?

LK: Yeah, no, it was, it was fine after [laughs], it's actually like, yeah, this is a much probably nicer place to grow up and–

FR: So a bit of a different, **[00:40:00]** a different atmosphere, a different environment than Smethwick?

LK: Yeah, for sure, yeah, for sure, yeah, I think cos everyone just had a bit more money, different experience, everyone was quite, a bit posher I think [laughs], it was, yeah, I would say most of my friends then were probably middle class, whereas everyone in Smethwick was working class, so there was quite a lot of class difference really, yeah, no, I just had a nice, normal [laughs], well, as normal as normal can be, yeah, experience there.

FR: Yeah, and would you still have been attending the, the church, which I think you said wasn't a Pentecostal church, sorry, it was a Pentecostal church, but it wasn't an Elim church?

LK: Yeah, so we went for a while, it's, it was very cliquey and–

FR: Hmm, that's interesting, they can be, they can be, those, some of those churches, yeah.

LK: Yeah, so, cos, yeah, my mum and dad made me and my sister keep going, but we, we eventually just stopped because we just didn't get on. I think a lot of the youth groups and things there, a lot of the kids had been attending the church since they were children, so they were all best friends and trying to make any friends there was really, really difficult, so we, we kept being dragged to church [laughs] as long as possible, but then stopped maybe when I was sixteen probably.

FR: And was that a big deal for your parents to, for you to stop going?

LK: Yeah, I think cos we kind of faded out, I mean, even to this day my mum will still, mum and dad are still like, when are you going to start going to church again, but yeah, it did just kind of peter out and I think they got to a point where they're like, well, you're grown up enough, you can make your own decision if you're going to go or not, but.

FR: It wasn't like a big–

LK: Interestingly, at school though, cos it was, so the new high school that I went to was a Church of England high school, so there was a lot of Christian stuff going on there and I was like, a big member of the Christian Union and we'd go on their away weekends and things like that, so going to church and things at school and joining the Christian clubs and stuff that I was all happy doing that, it was just, I just didn't get on with anyone in the, the church that they went to.

FR: So it was, it was just this kind of specific church environment then?

LK: Yeah, I think so, yeah.

FR: Okay, and then, what about your dad's MS diagnosis? That must have been difficult.

LK: Yeah, that was, that was, that was really hard, yeah, so that was when I was, yeah, sixteenish.

FR: Really young.

LK: Yeah, we knew, we knew there was something not right, so it wasn't really actually that big of a surprise, but it was, it was tough and we then had to move again, so we've actually, my parents have had four different houses in Croydon [laughs].

FR: Okay, wow, wow.

LK: So they had the first house, and they had trouble selling the house in Birmingham as well, so they had rented it out for a year or so while they were trying to sell it, so then once that was all done they moved into a house that they preferred more, so it was more like a house my family would have liked and we were really happy there, but then it, cos it was an old Victorian house, it was impossible, you just couldn't adapt it for my dad, who by that point needed a wheelchair, so we had to move again and that was really hard. They moved out to Selsdon, so it's in, it's in Croydon, but it's more of a like, I always call it Wisteria Lane [laughs], so it's, it's an estate, but it was, it's all, everyone's very curtain twitchy, sort of, yeah, in each other's business, again, it was very white middle class, which I still found quite, having gone from Birmingham, quite strange really, and it was a bit further out from the centre of Croydon as well, so I missed being in the, not, in the town really and different, round my frie-, round my friend like, it wasn't far away, but it was, it was, it was a tough move cos we all really liked the previous house and again, the house they moved into wasn't really one that we'd want, but it was, it was easier to be able to adapt it to some extent, but

getting it adapted was impossible as well, so, but we had a lot of problems with, cos by that point my mum was the only person working and the council weren't able to help with any of the adaptations cos they said she earned too much money, but it was like, I've got two kids to look after, I've got to pay the mortgage on my own, support my husband and they were just useless and wouldn't help at all, so there was about a year when my dad was pretty much housebound because you couldn't be given an electric wheelchair until we had a ramp, but we couldn't afford to get a ramp put in, so he was [laughs] just stuck in the house, and even-, so eventually our church just said this is ridiculous and did like, a DIY SOS on the whole house and completely adapted it for him and so the ch-, even though I feel like, oh the church was always cliquey and I didn't like it and I stopped going, they, they were so supportive of my parents and rallied round and just completely changed the whole, the whole house really, so that he could have some independence and get out and do stuff.

FR: So the church is still a kind of a support at that stage, yeah, yeah.

LK: Yeah.

FR: Oh that sounds like a really stressful [laughs] period.

LK: Yeah, it really was [laughs], yeah.

FR: And I think that thing about moving kind of from the city to the suburbs or whatever, even if it's not that far, when you're sixteen it can feel really far I guess.

LK: Yeah, yeah.

FR: I don't know Croydon terribly well, I've passed through it a few times. Is it, it's kind of, is it a multicultural kind of place, what, what's it like?

LK: Yeah, it is, so the cent-, so the centre's quite multicultural, but then–

FR: Quite kind of modern, I can picture it cos I get the train, yeah.

LK: Yeah, yeah, it's always in the butt of jokes of, oh Croydon is where all the chavs are from and [laughs], it does have quite a reputation really of, for London it's not the nicest area, but again, coming from Smethwick it was [laughs], it was like, oh this is really fancy [laughs], so yeah, so it does, I think cos the centre of Croydon's very Labour like, multicultural, but then round the outskirts there's lots of areas that are, so Selsdon where my parents moved, south Croydon, Coulsdon, all round that area's very white, middle class, Conservative, so it's, it's quite, you feel there's quite a different vibe wherever, which part of Croydon you're in really.

FR: No, that makes sense, that's, that's interesting, and then what about, so the church, the, which was cliquey, you mentioned that the church in Birmingham would have had a lot of West Indian–

LK: Yeah, so again, yeah, so this church was, it was quite, quite, I'd say fifty-fifty white-black, it's very much, it's a really big church, so that was it as well, so going from a church in Birmingham where my dad was the pastor, I'd grown up there, everyone knows who I am cos I'm the pastor's kid, it's, it's not a very big church either, so everyone knows who you are, moving to, going to this church where easily a few hundred people, they had like, two services, it's in an old warehouse, so maybe six hundred people odd go to this church, so it was very much like, I don't know anyone here, I don't know, it was difficult, but yeah, no that's, it's a very multicultural church as well, yeah.

FR: But that's interesting like, they call it like, a megachurch those kind of big churches. My, my grandmother's church in Northern Ireland has kind of recently moved from a much smaller building to a much bigger building and she's found it quite strange I think to deal with that kind of, even just the building, this, the different building is quite a strange thing.

LK: Yeah, but I think that's why it gets quite cliquey as well because you can't know everyone in the church, so everyone just makes their own little groups of, these are the people that I know and I'm friends with and will talk to on Sunday morning and then, yeah.

FR: No, it makes sense, and then thinking about, thinking about your dad getting ill, would he ever have thought about going back to Northern Ireland, was that ever a possibility or something that he considered?

LK: No, it wouldn't have been, but I think it was more cos he then was reliant on my mum, so my mum had this good job and we then, cos my dad's quite a bit younger than his sisters, so his sisters, so my dad is, let's see, he was born in '65, **[00:50:00]** his, his sisters I think are in their sixties, mid-sixties or so, so, and Valerie's looked after my granny for years and years, it was kind of like, now it's my mum's family are looking after us instead, so I think, yeah, that was, it wasn't really an option.

FR: No, no, that, that makes sense I guess, okay, and then for you, so you went through school in Croydon, and did you have a plan for what you wanted to do after you finished school or had you thought about it?

LK: No, so [laughs], I'm still like that now, I'm thirty and I'm still like, I don't know what I'm doing, yeah, I never had a plan. I found sixth form quite hard, I think it's mostly because it was very much aimed at, okay, you're all doing your A-levels, you're going to university, you've all got a plan of what you're going to do and I just didn't, so I found the whole thing pointless really [laughs] and just didn't really enjoy it. So my high school was called St Andrews and then they had a sister, sister school called Tenison's, which was the school that my sis-, that my mum worked at, and Tenison's was the one that had the sixth form, so it was, a majority of people from my school went to Tenison's to sixth form, so that's where I went, but again you then had, although it mixed in as it, as it went on, you had the problem of, you had the Tenison's kids and then you had the St Andrews kids, so again it was like, this is quite cliquey and, yeah, I chose quite different A-levels than my friends did as well, so there would often be times where I wasn't, we'd have different lunchtimes or whatever, so I just didn't really enjoy sixth form at all, yeah, so then I decided, by the end of that I had decided I wasn't going to go to university, and kind of decide what I would do, so yeah, I, I

got a job, a dodgy job [laughs], where I wasn't, I was essentially a volunteer, but employed for six months at this, it was, it was a, what even was it [laughs], it was, it was, it was a like, a community learning centre sort of place, but it was linked to the, this, the guy who owned it, it was linked to his church somehow and then it, he then also tried to start a like, a PRU unit for kids that have been excluded from school and stuff, so there was a lot going on, but also there was just some strange things that would happen at that place, it was dodgy, so I, I worked there for a while and while I was there I, they gave me some, they had like, tuition for kids on the weekend that they would do, so they let me do the younger kids for that, so I would actually get paid for it, cos the problem was I came out of sixth form with some A-levels, they weren't great, but I had no experience, and trying to find a job when you're eighteen, everyone says you need some experience and it's like, it's impossible, so I did, I did the admin there for free for a while just, just so I then had something I could put on my CV, but, so while I was there doing the tutoring I was like, okay, maybe I'd like to be a primary school teacher, so, so I had that year off and then I applied and went to Bangor University to do, in Wales, to do childhood studies with a view that I would then, well, I had, I had applied to a few different universities to actually do a primary teaching degree, but again cos my A-levels weren't great cos I had no sense of purpose while I was at sixth form [laughs], they all said no, so yeah, I was, I was like, oh I'll change it, I'll do a PGCE afterwards and do that, but halfway through my time there I decided actually I don't want to be a teacher, so, so actually I dodged a bullet with that one really [laughs].

FR: [laughs] Yeah, it's good to realise before you've done the PGCE I guess. So what, what kind of brought about the realisation that you didn't want to be a teacher?

LK: I just, cos, so I just found that primary kids were quite annoying [laughs], I just didn't have the temperament for [laughs], and because of the degree I had if you want to do secondary teaching you have to have a specific degree, so I couldn't do secondary because of only having a childhood studies degree.

FR: I see.

LK: But you can do primary teaching from that. I did, after I did finish uni I then got a job as a TA at, back at Tenison's, where I went for sixth form, and loved it and I think if I had had a different degree then maybe I would have become a secondary teacher.

FR: So you've got to do like, history and then a PGCE or whatever.

LK: Yeah, you have to have a specialism really to be able to do it, so.

FR: Right, and what was, so you moved from, from Croydon to Bangor then, for a wee while, I've never been to Bangor, but that's–

LK: Yeah, you have to make your own fun in Bangor [laughs].

FR: [laughs] It's quite a small town, right?

LK: Yeah, and I, I'd never been, I literally just accepted a [laughs], accepted a place and just went.

FR: How did you pick it, why Bangor?

LK: Why did I pick it, I think because I'd been, I've always had a weird relationship of like, what am I [laughs]. So I was born in Wales, so does that make me Welsh, my dad's Northern Irish, does that make me Northern Irish, mum's English, so I, I do always say oh I'm British, just cos it like, incorporates all three of them, cos if you say you're Welsh people say well, you were only there for a year when you were a baby, or if then they say oh you're Irish and English, but only really ever going over to Northern Ireland for holidays and things and visiting family, you don't have a strong connection really with, with Northern Ireland I don't think.

FR: And then I guess when you're over there people think you're English.

LK: You're the English kids cos you've got an English accent and, yeah, it was, there was always the feeling of, I think my mum always felt a bit of an outsider go-, visiting as well cos it was like, oh here's the English wife who's taken away my boy [laughs], that kind of stuff, so, so yeah, it was always just felt, and then if I said I was English it feels like I'm disregarding all the other parts, so, so I think part of going to, putting down, cos I put down, I put down a uni for London and Nottingham just cos I like Nottingham, but then I don't know why I put Bangor, I think I just thought maybe it'd be good to actually spend some time in Wales and, and then that was the one that said yes [laughs], so off I went.

FR: Is it south Wales or north Wales?

LK: North Wales, it's over, it's just across the bridge from Anglesey.

FR: Right, yeah, yeah, yeah, I know south Wales a wee bit better, but it's, it's beautiful, I mean, it's a beautiful country.

LK: It's lovely, but yeah, no, I went on holiday there the year after I graduated cos it was like, maybe I should actually go and see [laughs], go and walk there and climb Snowdon and stuff like that, like all the stuff that's actually round there I just didn't appreciate at the time, but it was, it was nice, there was, so it's, cos it's on the coast as well, so you got quite a, a good, it was, there wasn't a lot to do there, but it was, everyone made their own fun like, it's not [laughs] usual for students, oh we're bored, let's go crabbing like [laughs], that was the kind of things we would do, go to Morrisons and buy some fifty pee sausages and see how many crabs we can pull out the sea [laughs], things like that.

FR: That, that really is making your own fun, that's [laughs]–

LK: Yeah, cos the nearest cin-, they had knocked down the, the student union the year or two before we arrived, so we didn't even have a student union cos that got delayed being rebuilt and stuff, the nearest cinema was a thirty-minute train ride away and, yeah, if you wanted a Starbucks you had to go, you had to go to Chester, so [laughs].

FR: Wow [laughs].

LK: It's funny, going back there now, it's really developed a lot, even since I was there in what, 2011 to 2013ish, it's changed, it has changed a lot and they've built the new SU and there's the cinema there and things like that, but it was fun, it, I think it did mean that everyone was friendlier with each other really and everyone knew each other.

FR: You're all kind of thrown together I guess.

LK: Yeah.

FR: There's a kind of an evangelical, religious tradition in Wales as well, was that part of your experience there or–? **[01:00:00]**

LK: So I joined the CU for a, for a, a month or two, maybe, but I didn't really stay there, but yeah, you'd, occasionally you'd see people walking around, round asking did they want to pray with you and things like that, so it was, it was noticeable, but wasn't a big, a big part of, yeah, I, I made friends with a g-, there was about three girls, there was three girls that I lived with, one of them was Catholic, so she would go to church every, every Sunday, so I felt like there was always some-, there was a few, I did, there was a few of our friends that were, my friends that were Christian, so it was, it was interesting, I could then have conversations with them and then, but then my other friends were totally different and had never really had any religion or ex-, any experiences like that, so it was quite a strange, ragtag group of friends [laughs] I ended up with.

FR: It's something I've always found interesting about living in England I guess, so I'm not, I'm not really religious, but I'm from Northern Ireland and like, I feel like I know quite a lot about religion.

LK: Yeah.

FR: So even just like, knowing Bible stories and things, and then when I have English friends and I say oh it's like this Bible story–

LK: Yeah, they haven't got a clue.

FR: And they're like, what are you talking about [laughs], and I, yeah, it's quite strange, it's just a much more secular country than Northern Ireland, just even in terms of the language people use and stuff like that.

LK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: So it is a difference, yeah, and what about, so did, did moving to Wales help to resolve the kind of identity thing?

LK: Crisis [laughs].

FR: [laughs] I was, I was going to say.

LK: Not really [laughs].

FR: [laughs] I was going to say crisis and then I thought–

LK: I did a semester of Welsh, that was quite, I quite enjoyed doing that, cos of it being north Wales there is a big, compared to south Wales, a bigger push on we speak Welsh and trying to, again, they're just trying to get back their identity from, from, from the English again [laughs], but yeah, no, I, I did enjoy like, being around, I, I do think learning Welsh for a semester did really help and just of the way of how they changed the points scheme and stuff I couldn't take it for the next, next year as a, for it to actually count for anything, so I dropped it, but I feel like I probably would have, I did enjoy doing it, so I'd have carried on learning it, yeah, I, I, yeah, I enjoyed it, I think it did help, just having an idea of this was where I was born and this is what it's like in this, the culture's like really, I think.

FR: And maybe a little bit easier than the Irish thing to kind of get hold of since you, since you lived in Wales, yeah.

LK: Yeah, yeah.

FR: Okay, so then you, you graduated from the childhood studies degree, even though you'd decided that you didn't want to teach.

LK: Yeah.

FR: Yeah, and then moved back to Croydon for a wee while?

LK: Yeah, so I moved in with my parents again and did a year and a bit, I think, as a teaching assistant at the school and then I got a job, my current job, which I'm, well, at the time I was just office admin person for, so it's for the United Reform church, so they, they have the synods, so it's the Southern Synod, so it's, yeah, so at their office, so I then, I've worked up, so now I'm the PA to the moderator and the synod clerk, so yeah, and then–

FR: So Reform, Reform church is also evangelical, is it, broadly?

LK: No, it's more, so they were originally Congregationalist and it might even be Presbyterian, I'm not sure.

FR: Okay.

LK: But yeah, they joined together and made the Reform church.

FR: It gets so complicated, all of the [laughs]–

LK: It, it does [laughs].

FR: The schisms and the joining togethers and the–

LK: Mm hmm, yeah.

FR: And you've, and so you've stayed in, in Croydon really.

LK: Yeah, yeah, so yeah, I moved out of my parents', eventually it was just, it was quite str-, with my dad being so unwell it was quite stressful living there and just worrying about him all the time, so I eventually, I moved out, lived in a flat in Croydon for a year and then moved in with some friends in Wimbledon for two years, and then, but still travelling back to Croydon cos they're, they're quite close together, yeah, and then we've just moved into Croydon, central [laughs] Croydon in October, so.

FR: Did you say you lived with your, your partner?

LK: Yeah, so yeah, so I moved in with, with my girlfriend in October, so.

FR: Cool, in central, back in central Croydon?

LK: Yeah, yeah, yeah, so her, but she was a friend of a, someone, she was friends with one of my friends from high school, so yeah, we've known each other a long time.

FR: Oh so you've known each other from like, way back?

LK: Yeah, yeah, so we were like, best friends for about ten years and it was like, okay, actually I want to date you now [laughs].

FR: Wow, okay.

LK: But yeah.

FR: That's, ah that's really interesting.

LK: Yeah.

FR: And would you still sort of, are you still back and forth to your parents' house? I suppose you live reasonably close.

LK: Well, yeah, it's a bit, cos of corona it's been tricky and stuff as well, so I haven't really seen them very much at all.

FR: Of course, of course, I suppose I hadn't even thought, but I guess your, I guess your dad would need to be especially careful.

LK: Yeah, so my da-, my dad's in the vulnerable, so they both, in fact, they had them yesterday, my mum and dad got their inject-, first injections yesterday.

FR: Oh congratulations, that's good news.

LK: That was exciting [laughs], I should probably phone them up and ask how it went, but yeah, so they were shielding for a long time and then there was questions about whether he should be shielding or not, but, cos they, they reckon that because, with MS it's your, your antibodies and things are fighting your own body, so he, so he's [laughs], his immune system's already on high alert, so they reckon it wouldn't actually be too bad for him cos it would fight it off quite quickly, but.

FR: I see.

LK: Yeah, so I have, I haven't really seen them a lot in the, maybe three, four times in the last, since March last year, so it has been tricky.

FR: Yeah, no, sure. I think [laughs], I'm trying to think of my list of questions. I guess I'm interested in some, some kind of more, some of these questions I ask them and I'm like, I couldn't answer these questions, so I don't know why I'm [laughs], but yeah, I mean, I guess broadly we're interested in like, how Northern Ireland, Northern Irishness has kind of affected your identity, your sense of self, your whatever, so yeah, I mean, I, just kind of generally, do you think, is it something that's affected the way you think about, I don't know, politics or about England, about living in England?

LK: There was a, I'm trying to think, there was, so my girlfriend works in Westmin-, works at Westminster School, so often–

FR: Oh okay.

LK: She, she's said to me before, oh if there's a protest or something happening, there'll be a lot of armed police around, and it really unnerves her, but whenever [laughs] I see them I'm just like, yeah, that's normal, but again I think that that comes from visiting Northern Ireland as a child and, or visiting the army bases to go and see my mum and dad's parents that in Northern Ireland, it was like, yeah, guns are just a normal, a normal thing [laughs], that's what the police carry and that's, there's always a bit of weird tension in the air anyway [laughs], so things like that just don't bother me quite as much and I feel just come a bit used to it and numb to it that that's just what happens, that was one thing I thought of, yeah, recently I was like, that's, that's not quite [laughs] usual for, if you lived in England your whole life.

FR: No, that's really interesting, I mean, yeah, the police are still in Northern Ireland, are kind of armed as a matter of course, whereas in England it's like a special branch of them that, yeah.

LK: Yeah, what else.

FR: And so you must, so you've got some memories of going back to Northern Ireland and kind of being aware of the kind of infrastructure of the conflict or whatever.

LK: Yeah, **[01:10:00]** yeah, so, well, like, we always knew oh there was the Troubles and it was diffic-, mum, I, they didn't talk about it a lot, but it'd be things like, my mum has mentioned a few times that when she would go over when they were dating to visit, things like checking for bombs when you go in a shop and things like X-ray machines [laughs] just to go shopping and things like that like, we were always aware that it was quite a tricky time to be living in Northern Ireland, but that was kind of like, that was just, everyone, everyone's quite blasé about it like, that was just what happened and, yeah.

FR: Well, it, yeah, again it's that thing about–

LK: Yeah, that's just how it was [laughs].

FR: [laughs] Yeah, yeah, and going to army bases must have been quite like, I, there was an army base near where I lived and it was like, huge walls, like, really kind of securitised.

LK: Yeah, it did always, it was always a bit scary turning up, especially when you first arrived, so if you were first, we would, I would go and stay with my grandparents in the summer for, you know, a few days, a week or so, and it did always feel a bit weird cos when you first arrived you'd have to wait in the car park outside while they went and did you a badge and checked your passport and whatnot, but then once you were in there and we were in their house it was kind of like, okay, this is, this is how it is, but you did always feel a bit on edge if you were then walking around outside and–

FR: It's so funny that you've got that kind of, the other side of the family connection to Northern Ireland as well.

LK: Yeah, yeah, there's like, a weird crossover, yeah. I would, I would say probably that my link, biggest link to Northern Ireland would be food really–

FR: That's interesting.

LK: That's the, so whenever my granny would come over she would bring, you know those like, chequered plasticky bags you get at the market that are like, huge, she'd fill one of those with Tayto's cheese and onion crisps for my dad and it [laughs] was like, oh granny's arrived, the crisps have arrived, or she'd have been to the bakery and bought treacle farls, things like, like–

FR: Soda bread?

LK: Soda bread, yeah, just foods like that, as soon as, whenever we'd go over to visit for, when we went over there first thing granny would do, oh do you want a wee fry, it was like [laughs], didn't matter what time of the day it was, do you want a fry [laughs].

FR: Breakfast, lunch or dinner, it can be, yeah.

LK: Yeah, yeah, so I feel that is the, the main connection I feel to Northern Ireland is, let's eat these foods that, our, our new local supermarket that we go to, there's a, there's quite a big Irish Traveller community that leaves nearby it, so they have a section of Irish food, it makes me laugh when you see [laughs] what they, what Sainsbury's think is Irish food, but yeah, no, I do, I get my dad some stuff from there now and again, just, but I think that is where I would feel the biggest link really.

FR: No, that, that makes sense and I, it's interesting that your dad's retained some kind of connection with Northern Ireland via like, Tayto crisps, for example.

LK: Yeah.

FR: Yeah. What about, so, so my, my impression of the Elim church in Northern Ireland was that it was quite homophobic [laughs].

LK: Yeah, coming out was a fun one [laughs], yes.

FR: So I don't want to, I don't want to assume or whatever, but–

LK: No, that's fine, it's fine. So I came out to my, I came out as bisexual to my mum when I was about sixteen and we just never mentioned it to my dad.

FR: Okay.

LK: [laughs] And then, and it just never really came up, and I never really, I never really ever had any boyfriends or girlfriends or anything for a very long time, so then, so then when I was then dating Alice I was like, right, we're going to have to, well, there had been something coming up before, things that I was, I think my mum had been telling him things and having discussions away from me, so that it wouldn't upset me, yeah, so there had been–

FR: Some kind of–

LK: Some kind of stuff, yeah, they, he, I had put something on Instagram like, we had been watching, we'd been watching an episode of *Sanctuary* [laughs], just like, some [indecipherable] sort of terrible sci-fi show thing and there's this one episode where she just kisses this woman really, completely out of the blue, it's never mentioned again, up until that point she was totally straight, just randomly kisses this woman at the end of the episode and it's never mentioned again, so I, we had been, it was just me and some friends just watching it and then we were, I think I'd recorded it on Instagram Stories and was, we were just laughing about it, so then, but I hadn't realised my dad had been watching my Instagram, so he watched it, he saw that and thought oh Lauren's watching women kissing women, when it was totally innocent, he was just like, what, this is a stupid plotline, so he, he had brought up to me the next time I'd gone round, so I had said to him oh yeah, no, I like, I like women and I like men, and he was like, okay, and that was the end of that, but then once I started dating Alice it then had to be, it was then I phoned up my mum and said can you tell dad cos I don't want to do this, and he was quite upset about it at first. He did

go on quite a big, big one eighty over the space of about three days which was wild [laughs], but yeah, no, I, yeah, my mum came and saw me the next day and said your dad's quite upset, but he's going to, he'll get over it, so it was, it was difficult, and we didn't tell my Irish aunties for a long time either cos we just weren't sure how it was going to be taken or, my, so my auntie Valerie, who's the younger one that my granny lived with, she, she would, she was, I don't think she actually follows me, but she, she found my Twitter account and whenever she would come over and visit she'd be like, oh I love reading your Twitter cos I can see what you're up to [laughs].

FR: Social media.

LK: In like, the most passive, weird way to find out what I'm, what I'm up to [laughs], she reads my–

FR: Yeah, just, just send me a message or something [laughs].

LK: Yeah [laughs], so, so I did go private for a bit once we started dating just cos I thought, I'm not doing this over Twitter, but then, and then she complained and was like, why has Lauren locked me out of her [laughs] Twitter account, yeah, but I can't remember how, I don't know if he told them in the end or, they kn-, they do know, but it's just never really been mentioned, but yeah.

FR: Right, okay, you can kind of circumvent these things in families can't you, where it's, it's known, but not discussed I suppose.

LK: Yeah, yeah, and then, but in fact, the other week mum had sa-, had been on the phone to them and they, so when they come to visit they, I think they fly into Gatwick and then that's a straight train connection to east Croydon and then they stay in the Travelodge in central Croydon and get the bus the next day and spend the day with my dad and then, they're not, they normally do a day and a half, so they'll come in the evening, stay at the Travelodge, visit my dad for the day, go back to Travelodge and then visit for the, until lunchtime and then they'll go up to my cousin in St Albans and stay with her for a bit, but they had said to mum like, oh whenever all corona's over we'll go, Lauren, now that Lauren lives round the corner from east Croydon we'll go and visit her for, for dinner, so it's never really been spoken about, but they se-, they're happy enough to invite themselves for dinner with me and Alice, so.

FR: That sounds like a–

LK: It seems positive [laughs].

FR: Okay, no, that's, that's really interesting, and I guess my, my impression is that Northern Ireland is not as homophobic as it maybe was ten, fifteen, twenty years ago.

LK: Yeah, I think, I think it has changed a lot. It's funny, my granny, when I was a kid, I remember my granny once said to my mum is Lauren a lesbian, and it's like, where did she get that from [laughs].

FR: That's so, so strange.

LK: At all [laughs], but it was kind of like, well, you were half right [laughs], but, but it was, it was bizarre, but there never really seemed to be a problem with her though, it was just, it was just a question of, it was very strange.

FR: But it's funny that she would, that how would you assign that to someone, to a kid like, it's, yeah, I wonder.

LK: Yeah, so yeah, weird, but yeah, no, I, I, yeah, I think from, especially from growing up Presbyterian in, but I think that was the main part that dad found it really difficult at first. He had, there was some, I remember mum said that she said to him at the time, when he was very upset, why don't **[01:20:00]** you speak to, there had been another man at Bible college with him whose son came out as gay and I, I don't know the full story, but I think he just blocked him out of his life, and, and mum said why don't you phone him up and ask what he thinks about his son, cos I think he now has big regrets that that's how that went down, so I think that kind of snapped him out of it a bit and made him realise that, that this could cause big problems, and lasting problems really, so.

FR: It's, it's really nice I guess to hear that there has been a kind of a, a rapprochement or whatever, that you sort of–

LK: Yeah.

FR: Yeah, cos it like, yeah, it can cause big family rifts I suppose, but yeah, I, it's interesting because definitely even when I was growing up I, I felt like Northern Ireland was a, was real-, was very, very homophobic.

LK: Yeah.

FR: I don't know about more so than England cos obviously I didn't grow up in England, so I don't know, but–

LK: I think, yeah, I think, I think probably the impression I got was that Northern Ireland was more homophobic than like, even, with the time, it's changed a lot with the time recently anyway, so back, back when I was late primary school, early, it was always like, oh you're gay as a, that was the insult, you're gay, but I feel that, feeling was that lingered on quite a lot longer for, in Northern Ireland than it did in England.

FR: I guess–

LK: I think, I think we always feel like, oh Northern Ireland's always about five years behind [laughs] everyone else anyway, so it was, yeah.

FR: Yeah, and I guess that thing about it, its being a less secular kind of country as well like, the kind of Presbyterian, and Catholic I suppose, the thing that is still kind of part of the culture maybe in Northern Ireland in a way that it isn't in England.

LK: Yeah.

FR: Yeah, but it's cool that your aunts are going to come round for dinner, that sounds–

LK: Yeah, yeah, it'll be nice [laughs].

FR: [laughs] Hopefully once–

LK: Yeah, cos up until then I was kind of like, do we just not talk about it, is it not, I was like, yeah.

FR: And that they've kind of been coming back and forth, so you've got a kind of renewed connection with them.

LK: Yeah, no, it has been nice cos there, yeah, there was those few years it was kind of like, I don't really have any connection to them, but they have been, yeah, no, it's been nice seeing them, yeah.

FR: And then, okay, so just, just some kind of final questions I guess. I wondered if you had been aware of any of the kind of the, the Troubles in England? So there was a bombing in Birmingham, although I think that would have been before you lived there.

LK: Yeah, it was, but it was before me, but yeah, I do vaguely, again, it probably would have been from TV and things that I would have heard about them.

FR: I'm thinking I suppose also of like, the London bombings of the nineties, but maybe you would have been living in Birmingham then, I'm not sure about the timetable, but–

LK: Yeah, I don't have a recollection of them at the time, but that might have just been cos I was too young, yeah, if, if my parents were talking about them I wasn't paying attention, yeah, no, learning about things like that it's always been mostly through watching TV shows and things where that was, you know, some history on a TV show or, yeah, it–

FR: Well, I was going to ask about–

LK: It just wasn't brought up a lot–

FR: TV shows and stuff as well–

LK: Yeah.

FR: So like, have you kind, do you kind of, is, I'm thinking of like, *Derry Girls* or stuff like that, like–

LK: Yeah, so we've been watching, we watched *Derry Girls* and I, I watched it first and I was like, dad needs to watch this, and again that was funny, that was hilarious cos there's that episode where they go to the beach, was it, I'm trying to remember what beach it is, and my dad was like, where is this beach, I don't know about this beach [laughs], because he always went to Holywood as a kid and apparently there was nothing, well, I've been there, but I can't remember, but he was like, there's no funfair, there's no great pier, there's no swimming pools and stuff there and again, it was like, well, the Catholics have hidden that from us, that was in the Catholic area [laughs], it's like, what are you talking about [laughs], but it was really funny cos there's also another episode where they're right, when they have the mix, so when they're trying to like, mix the Protestant kids and the Catholic kids, and they're writing on the blackboard all the like, differences–

FR: Protestants keep their–

LK: And even through that it was like, yeah, granny Kane did that, granny Kane kept her bread in the cupboard, granny Kane [laughs], so I do, I do feel a connection through that actually cos it's like, yeah, no, I do understand these jokes probably more than my girlfriend who's English would understand them, so although I'm like, oh I don't really have that big a connection, there was always low level, just, things rather than the big politics and it was always this is what you do on a, you put your bread in the cupboard [laughs], you eat Tayto's crisps, you know, it was like, these–

FR: The one, the one that amazed me from *Derry Girls* was they said Protestants put their toasters in the cupboard, and I was like, and I was like, my mum does put the toaster in the cupboard [laughs].

LK: Yeah, why do they do that [laughs]?

FR: [laughs] And I, I had never thought of it as being a–

LK: Yeah, as a Protestant thing.

FR: A signifier of Protestantness, but I guess, I guess it must be [laughs].

LK: Yeah, although there was one, there was one story dad used to tell quite a lot that was, okay, it was rough growing up in the seventies [laughs] in Northern Ireland, when he first, the first day he started at secondary school some kid cut his blazer up because they thought his surname was O'Kane rather than Kane, and so there was always that thought of, yeah, it was actually quite scary and dangerous that just a miscommunication of, you've got the wrong surname, that you, yeah.

FR: So O'Kane would have been read as a Catholic name, rather than a–?

LK: Yeah.

FR: Okay.

LK: Yeah.

FR: And it's interesting that going back to Derry as an adult your dad would have had that sense of kind of risk or threat from Catholic, yeah.

LK: Yeah.

FR: But, and it's, I think it's interesting also that you both watched *Derry Girls*, so it's kind of like, a way to–

LK: Yeah, yeah, and we would talk about it, so it did feel like a connection of, and then it meant that we could phone, so then, I would've, I would've been watching it in my flat, so I would then phone up and we were discussing it and we'd be talking about oh your dad didn't know about the beach and [laughs], it was, it was a good way of finding out more stories from his childhood and, yeah, finding out what it was like to be living there at that time.

FR: And would your aunts talk about Northern Ireland at all or–?

LK: Not in a general way really, it was, it's more they just talk about what's going on in their life, though you do get the occasional talk, discussions about driving over into the Republic for petrol, that's a, that's a common, a common one [laughs] for the petrol prices.

FR: Yeah, cos it's cheaper.

LK: Yeah, but no, it's mostly just their day-to-day life, nonsense, who's, who's rid the hunt across my land and that kind of stuff [laughs], just local, local things, yeah.

FR: Sure, no, okay, and then just kind of final questions I suppose, have you, you said, you mentioned that you got an Irish passport as a result of Brexit mostly.

LK: Yeah.

FR: And have you been kind of following, my, my impression, living in England, is that Northern Ireland is much more kind of visible [laughs] in the English news at the minute, both I think through stuff like *Derry Girls*, but then also just through Brexit, the DUP having a, a role in the Conservative government and all of that, so I just wondered if you'd kind of been following Northern Irish kind of–

LK: I've, I've, I've not been watching the news so much, with all the pandemic stuff, it just stresses me out.

FR: Me, yeah, me too, me too [laughs].

LK: So I've just been [laughs] trying to, it's like, if I see things popping up every now and again I'll have a quick glance at the BBC website and see what's going on, but no, it has been

more and I've noticed more, maybe on Twitter and stuff, discussing the borders and can they really be doing taxes and things on, import taxes, it's, it's impossible, and then the whole time watching it, it's kind of like, any of this, these things are going to break the Good Friday Agreement and it's going to be disastrous, so it has been on my radar more I'd say, but, it's, it's interesting, it's been interesting seeing more English people discussing it and thinking they're, they're not necessarily getting all the nuance of what, how you would perceive it if you were in Northern Ireland, you know.

FR: Yeah.

LK: Yeah.

FR: And you've got a slightly different sense of it, even, even though you're not–

LK: Yeah, even though I still feel like I'm completely unqualified and don't really know what's going on [laughs], I still feel like **[01:30:00]** people aren't understanding it quite to the extent that it needs to be understood, I think as well there's a fee-, I guess with younger people as well that are just totally obliv-, cos it's not taught about in schools or in history or anything, they've got no idea, so I guess, I guess, I reckon if you asked someone, say, in their twenties now they, they wouldn't really have any idea of the implications of if they did put an import border and stuff between the two, what would actually happen, you know, so.

FR: No, I have, I've taught Northern Irish history in university courses and they're kind of starting, the base level of most kind of eighteen-year-olds, nineteen-year-olds is just nothing–

LK: Nothing, yeah.

FR: Which is not, it's not their fault, I mean, they're not offered–

LK: No, it's not, it should be, I mean, it's a, a lot of history really, we just, history in schools is terrible [laughs], cos any, any problems the English have caused get completely glossed over [laughs], which, you know, are quite a lot [laughs], but yeah, no, I do think it would be more useful if more local history was taught in schools rather than just oh let's do the Tudors, let's do World War One, World War Two, that's all you need to know.

FR: [laughs] The, the basics.

LK: Yeah.

FR: I think it's interesting you said that you would call yourself British, maybe?

LK: Yeah.

FR: It's like, I get what you mean about like, it's hard to, you wouldn't say English because that seems to leave things out, but you're not sure if Welsh or Irish, if you quite qualify–

LK: Qualify [laughs], yeah.

FR: [laughs] For want of a better word, yeah.

LK: Yeah.

FR: That's interesting.

LK: Yeah, and I feel, I've felt like that for a long, long time like, even as a kid it was kind of like, well, what am I, cos I've always found it interesting how people are like, oh it's just what your parents, where your parents are from, that's what counts, that's what you are, but and then, it's like, but, if you've grown, been born somewhere and grown up there your whole time, whole life is that not where you're from, so yeah, British just seemed to cover it all [laughs], so.

FR: And it's kind of interesting as well that, you know, like, your dad wouldn't have thought of himself as a migrant necessarily.

LK: Yeah.

FR: And you probably knew the children of migrants in places like Smethwick, but it doesn't, it's not quite that kind of–

LK: Yeah, it always felt like, oh it's just, you know, an hour on the plane, that's not, it's not far, it's part of the UK, it's not any different, yeah.

FR: Ah it's really interesting. Thanks so much Lauren, I think I've kind of covered everything that I wanted to cover. Is there anything that we, that we haven't talked that you thought that we might talk about or that you thought would be interesting?

LK: I don't think so, I think I've, yeah, I think that was everything I was thinking about.

FR: Alright.

LK: Yeah.

FR: Well, thanks so much, we can, I can stay in touch, I can send you on any, any kind of, anything that happens with the material.

LK: Okay, yeah, that'd be good, yeah.

FR: And, yeah, let me know if you have any, any kind of questions or any thoughts afterwards, but otherwise enjoy the rest of your, your weekend.

LK: Yeah, no, it's great, thank you.

FR: Yeah, thank you so much.

LK: It's, it's going to be, I'll be really interested to see the research that you get cos it's, it is a, it is just a part of history and it's just ignored [laughs] like, it is quite different being in Northern Ireland, moving from Northern Ireland to England, it's like a whole different world really like, they're very similar, but, and it's not really thought of as, well, I guess in my family it wasn't a big deal, so it'll be, yeah, I'm interested to see what [laughs] you find out.

FR: Similar, but not the same, right–

LK: Yeah.

FR: Which is the kind of, yeah.

LK: Yeah.

FR: No, alright, well, we'll stay in touch, but thanks so much and enjoy your weekend, take care.

LK: You too, alright, bye.

FR: Cheers, bye, bye.

INTERVIEW ENDS