

## M10: PATRICIA MCALEESE INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Patricia McAleese
Interviewer: Dr Barry Hazley
Interview summarisers: Dr Fearghus Roulston and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded as a single audio file with no section breaks

M10: Patricia McAleese	Start time: 00:00	Finish time: 01:55:07	Duration: 01:55:07	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	<p>Outlines what prompted her to take part in this oral history project is her view that she and others like her are ‘part of the forgotten history of what happened, we’re really displaced people’. Explains that her mother was from a farming family in Coalisland, Co. Tyrone and her father a labourer from Belfast, who was affected by poor health and died when she was thirteen. Recalls her pre-Troubles working-class childhood in the Falls Road area of Belfast, describing a vibrant community spirit and good interreligious relations, although tensions surfaced around the Twelfth of July.</p>			
10:00–19:59	<p>Recalls her ‘dreadful’ Catholic primary schooling at St Comgall’s, which marked the start of her highly gendered educational journey: ‘from the age of five to twenty-one I was never in a class with a male’. Despite this, she notes her good fortune in being ‘born at the right time’, which meant that, unlike her older siblings, she was able to progress to secondary school and train as a teacher. Describes spending summers, especially around the Twelfth, with her mother’s family in Tyrone, which ‘was like nirvana to us’: ‘we’d do all sorts, like getting in the cart on the back of the horse, out to the fields and helping out, [...] cos that was for us a novelty, coming out of Belfast’.</p>			
20:00–29:59	<p>Mentions her ‘quite pro-British’ Redmonite grandfather who served with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the First World War and moved to Belfast afterwards. Recalls the key role Sisters of Charity nuns played in galvanising her to complete her secondary education. Regards these nuns as ‘the first feminists’ for their commitment to educating working-class children. Praises the values they instilled and discusses volunteering under their auspices to care for local elderly people while still at school. Also recalls the nuns’ ‘undercover’ teaching of Irish history, which wasn’t on the curriculum. Observes that her mother was ‘very republican [...], so our Irishness and our sense of identity was very strong with her’.</p>			
30:00–39:59	<p>Mentions her mother seeing ‘all the hunger strikers’ coffins go up past her window, up to the graveyard’ in 1981. Recalls growing up with an awareness of civil rights ‘cos we knew right away we were second-class citizens’ and cites anti-Catholic employment practices in pre-Troubles NI. Explains how those with poor grades but ‘the right background’ could receive ‘preferential treatment’ in the education sphere. Recalls what led her to apply for a teacher training course in Manchester. Remembers attending a large civil rights rally in Andersonstown, after which she and a friend were mistakenly thought to be inciting a riot, which ended up being ‘like something out of a comedy’.</p>			
40:00–49:59	<p>Explains that she planned to spend only three years in Manchester when she left NI in 1969, after which she intended to return to Belfast to teach. Humorously recalls the irrational fear she and a female friend felt on their boat journey to England. Recollects her early experiences in Manchester and meeting many fellow trainee teachers from NI and the ROI, including her future husband, who was also from Belfast. Recalls returning to NI to get married and starting a family</p>			

	in Glengormley. Experiencing ‘tit for tat shootings every night’ there led them to move to the Bahamas, ‘thinking in a couple of years [...] it’ll be all over’. Kept in touch with NI during her seven years there and recalls how her children became acquainted with the Troubles during return visits: ‘they still talk about how they were standing next to a soldier with a big gun and thought nothing of it’.
50:00–59:59	Discusses her concerns while in the Bahamas for her siblings’ safety in NI and the difficulty of communicating with them. Describes settling on the island, finding a teaching post and raising her family there. Recalls buying a house in Prestwich and relocating to Manchester in 1988. Expresses regret at not moving to NI at this point, owing to her husband’s ‘terrible abhorrence of what was going on, he’d say we’re not bringing the kids up in that, but for me it was [...] home’. Speaks wistfully of having ‘ended up coming back and forward all the time’ and suggests her sense of dislocation influenced her children’s relationship to their Manchester roots: ‘that’s what happens, your children become displaced too’.
01:00:00–01:09:59	Confirms her keen interest in news from and about NI and her abiding desire to live there. Says English expats in the Bahamas ‘had no idea’ about NI, an ignorance shared by some of her friends and in-laws in England. While her marriage survived her time abroad, she left her husband in 2016 due to his alcohol issues. Comments on many English people’s uncritical regard for the moral probity of the British Army, despite evidence to the contrary. Recalls hearing the 1996 IRA bomb explosion in Manchester. Attests to the reality of anti-Irish hostility in 1980s England, which she links to people’s failure to realise that ‘a lot of Irish people [...] came over to get away from the Troubles’.
01:10:00–01:19:59	Discusses relations between NI and ROI migrants in Manchester during the Troubles, noting Southerners’ view of Northerners as ‘not really Irish’ and their lack of empathetic understanding of NI: ‘they were very down on what was going on up north and they really hadn’t a clue of the sides, the different sides of the argument’. Describes her family life and working life in Manchester after 1988, then reveals she moved to NI in 1999 with her two younger children, opting to live in Coalisland rather than ‘take them into west Belfast to get hammered’. Says their school experiences during their four-year stay included some bullying.
01:20:00–01:29:59	Explains how her daughter’s unhappiness in NI, coupled with her son’s desire to study at the University of Manchester, led to their return to Prestwich. Although disappointed, she feels both children benefited from getting ‘a little bit of their own culture then’. Re-emphasises the negative long-term impact of her initial migration, which she sees as having ‘a complete knock-on and displacement effect on the next generation because they did not belong to Manchester’ and have ‘all scattered’. Believes ‘the second generation of parents who are Northern Irish [...] actually feel displaced too’, insofar as they don’t feel fully Irish or Northern Irish, nor do they ‘feel completely English’. Mention the ‘whole sea-change’ in post-1998 NI and how ‘wonderful’ it was to spend four years there.
01:30:00–01:39:59	Talks about the importance of religion in her life and her efforts to instil Catholic values in her children, while accepting their right to question and reject their faith, as all four have done. Discusses her new life in Rawtenstall and her volunteering activities in the local community. Says that she is considering joining the Labour Party due to her concerns about the NHS, climate change and the government’s austerity policies. States that ‘home’s always been Northern Ireland, always will be’, and that ‘If the Troubles hadn’t have happened I would still be in Belfast [...] and being quite happy to stay there, never wanting to leave’.
01:40:00–01:49:59	Claims that migration has broadened her outlook and made her less prejudiced, saying: ‘it’s lovely to be in touch with people who are not rigid in their beliefs and

	their political views. I think that's an education in itself'. Explains how, over time, she has come to regard English people in a kindlier light. Reprises her critique of the structural inequalities and discriminatory practices that made Catholics feel like second-class citizens in pre-Troubles NI and her dismay at English people's obliviousness at the time.
01:50:00–01:55:07	Mentions her ongoing composition of her autobiography, through which she hopes to help her grandchildren to understand something of her life growing up in NI. Interview concludes with a conversation about the ways in which Cookstown in Co. Tyrone has changed over the last decade or so.