INTERVIEW G17: CLARE KING

Interviewer: Dr Jack Crangle
Interviewee: Clare King [pseudonym]
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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. The interview was recorded across two audio files that were spliced together to create a single audio file.

CK: Yeah.

JC: Okay, that's that running there now, so, thanks, you sent me the consent form through already. Just for the recording, can I get your verbal consent that you're alright for this to be recorded?

CK: Absolutely, that's fine, yeah.

JC: Great stuff, and then do you want start then just by introducing yourself. Tell me, if you tell me your name and today's date.

CK: What date is it today, it's, it's not the fir-, the–

JC: Thirtieth I've got here.

CK: Thirtieth of November, so I'm Clare King, thirtieth of November today, yeah.

JC: Great, and do you want to start then by telling me when and where you were born?

CK: I was born 1983 in Ballymena, County Antrim in Northern Ireland.

JC: Okay, and you grew up in Ballymena, did you?

CK: Yes, grew up in Ballymena until I came to Glasgow University when I was eighteen.

JC: Okay, and what was Ballymena like when you were growing up, can you tell me about what sort of place it was?

CK: I had, I had a happy upbringing and I suppose to the extent you don't really know any different when you're younger. Ballymena, it's, it's a big, it's becoming kind of, like, a sprawling city now, whereas when we grew up there it seemed really local, you knew

everybody or you kind of knew the family links, even though it was quite a big town, so growing up, a lot of memories are kind of marked with, like, Twelfth of July parades, red, white and blue kerbs, flags outside, every pub was one way affiliated or the other, so and it's, it's maybe changed a little bit in Belfast, but maybe less so in Ballymena. Ballymena's still quite like that, like, when I, I [indecipherable] all the time now to see my family and very quickly you're in a conversation about, just a general conversation about Protestant or Catholic, kind of, so growing up that was, that was, it's a massive highlight, like, every decision you make about schooling has got that in the background, so I can't really separate, thinking about growing up at home, that's kind of one of the first things that comes to my head, but seeing Ballymena a bit more kind of community-based than maybe it is now, like, as I say, you did know loads of people in your community, quite a deprived, or deprived, well, actually a very divided town, so a lot of deprivation, but I would say when I was growing growing up it was, like, you didn't even recognise it as deprivation, it was just everybody.

JC: Just what you're used to, yeah.

CK: It was what you were used to, people, people struggled, you know, so, but quite a divided town.

JC: And what did your parents do for a job?

CK: So my dad worked in Michelin, which was a massive employer, it's a tyre factory in Ballymena, that and Gallagher's were the two big employers, so a lot of my family were employed in Gallagher's, who make cigarettes, so two big factories. Dad was a factory worker, mum worked around us, you know, me and my brother, so he's three years older than me, so she would have, she worked, eventually a Sainsbury's opened and she worked in there for quite a lot of years, but before that, like, dinner lady at one point, worked in the wee shop round the corner a few hours, dad was shift work, so her work needed to fit round us at school and his shift work, so it really was a few, a few hours here and there, so as I, as I say, you know, there was a kind of deprivation, but it was common and it's still quite common, like, a lot of my cousins, the mums don't work, you know, it's the dad that works, and he works shifts and whatever work he can get and then the mum, I suppose it's quite difficult to work jobs round that at times.

JC: So, it sounds, like, yeah, that you were sort of saying, presumably money and stuff was quite tight then and things in, in the community more broadly and with people?

CK: Yeah, like, we were very close to our grandparents and stuff, so money would have been tight, like, now when I talk to my mum and dad about it, they were like, money was tight, we didn't know that, but we, kind of shielded, there was always food, there was always ample amount of food and we actually got on quite a few holidays, you know, like, Spain was the done, just your package holidays, so yes, now my mum and dad are like, we were broke, but we didn't know that and there was never, like, there was always clothes in and always food, and always heating, but I think just to, to get by would have been probably, it was tight, clearly, and it was counc-, it was, well, no, we, we had a, dad bought our house, but it was a council house bought and, you know, bought at Thatcher's time, so I suppose

low quality, low stock, quite, that kind of housing, but bought and, you know, mum and dad and a lot of people were very proud of their houses, so they, you know, they were sitting as nice as they could be.

JC: And was it just you and your parents and your brother, or did you have any other siblings?

CK: Just, just us and my brother. I was actually a, a twin, I was born a twin, but unfortunately my twin died of cot death, so I've got no, like, I've got no memories of that, you know, it's just in sort of photo book, so yeah, just the four of us, it was a, I mean, you want to see the size of this wee house, but it was, because they were council houses they were really well purpose-made, so that we all had a room, my room was a wee box room, but, you know, I had a room, my brother had a room and my mum and dad had a room, so, yeah, and we were very close walking distance with it, for my granny and grandad's house, walking distance from two of my aunts that I'm really close to.

JC: Yeah, that must have been nice having a lot of–

CK: So, you know, kind of bouncing about our family's houses quite fondly.

JC: Yeah, it must have been nice having a lot of family local.

CK: It was lovely, yeah, and it, yeah, like, you know, I can remember walking to my granny's, probably it was a five, not even a five-minute walk, but it seemed like ages when you had wee tiny legs, and my dad and my grandad would share a car, like, own, you know, it would stay at my grandad's house, so that's how close it was, my dad could go and pick up the car, so it kind of, I suppose being so close to your family allows for things like that, sharing, well, a car's the only thing I know of, but I'm sure there was a lot of stuff that was shared.

JC: Yeah, and did you go to school locally then as well, yeah?

CK: Yeah, so the local school which me and my brother both, I don't know, it, we both did well at the local school, it would have been a very deprived school and I think the area had probably got more deprived when we left, like, it definitely did, and the school never did particularly well, the primary school, and it's shut down now, again another kind of, well, I suppose in my opinion it's an unhelpful, divided thing is the eleven-plus in Northern Ireland, which is massive, massive focus, so essentially, do well in this one test, you go to a really, you go to a grammar school, don't do well, you go to a high school. Now weirdly, me and my brother both passed the eleven-plus and went to this really good, like, you know, a grammar school, the Academy it was called, if I hadn't passed that test on that day the high school didn't o-, whether it does now or not I don't know, but at that time it didn't offer A-levels, so university would have been ruled out for me at the age of eleven, when you do your eleven-plus.

JC: Yeah.

CK: So, I mean, that's, like, l-, I wouldn't be in Glasgow today, I wouldn't be where, you know, all because of maybe one test when I was eleven, and that's a massive focus and even my wee cousins, it's my cousins' kids, one of them, it's a wee bit different, the eleven-plus now, but she didn't do so well and I mean, for years before she was doing the tests it was talked about, she got a wee maths tutor and they don't have extra money for a maths tutor, but it's just to get you passing that test, so that you've got life opportunities, which shouldn't be in my opinion predetermined when you're eleven, but, but it clearly still is to an extent and it definitely was when we were young, so me and my brother did well because we just happened to pass on that day, if, if we hadn't we would have been at the other school and we would not have had the opportunity to do A-levels.

JC: Did, were you aware of that sort of pressure of how important that test was when you took it, yeah?

CK: Very much so, like, I, I think my brother, my brother's really clever and would have been probably more aware than me, older than me as well, I more felt the pressure cos he had passed and I was like, well, I want to go to the same school as him, so there's that as well, so there's the pressure, but then there's the pressure, I want to go to the same school as my family or my brother, yeah, I can't, although, to be honest, a lot of my friends didn't pass, so I was a bit gutted then at having to even though I initially wanted to cos I wanted to go the same school as my brother, because I saw how the family thought it was great that he went to this school, so I wanted a bit of that action, but then I was gutted as well cos I was leaving all my friends.

JC: Yeah.

CK: They were going to the other school and that just felt, you know, not very nice, so there's definitely an awareness of that, I would say from P5 onwards, it's, like, oh the eleven-plus, how are you going to do in the eleven-plus.

JC: Yeah, it's a lot of pressure to place on someone so young isn't it, I mean, it's, yeah, it's strange that Northern Ireland have kept that system, whereas it was sort of phased out in, **[00:10:00]** in England and stuff.

CK: Yeah, and then there's other implications because, like, I've, I've painted a story of deprivation which maybe is more, like, maybe no one else was looking at that, at us thinking that, but the school that we went to, all of my friends, then, you know, you're eleven, you go to the Academy, all my friends and their parents and their houses, I mean, their jobs, they were doctors, they were lawyers, they had big houses, we didn't, you know, like, we always had the uniform and we were always, like, immaculate, but I noticed the difference then, going to the big school with people with a lot of money, so it's like the financial divide as well. I suppose we know that poverty's a predictor of poor educational outcomes, like, that's not new information, but then it becomes apparent, even if you do break through and do well, your mum and dad are a bit different, aren't they, from everybody else in the Academy, they don't play the same sports or that kind of thing.

JC: So primary school would have been more people from sort of the type of background you were familiar with, then?

CK: Yeah, I, I, like, no one in my, I think, it's an estate I grew up in, no one in my estate apart from me and my brother went to the Academy.

JC: Right.

CK: The, you know, that school, so no, so we were getting a different bus route from everybody.

JC: Yeah, that must have been strange, like, I mean, did, did any of your friends that you knew go to the Academy, or was it just you?

CK: Just us, and I was the only person that passed the exam that year, and I mean, I can't, my mum and dad weren't exactly, you know, pushing the homework down our necks or anything, so I don't really know what, my mum always says it's cos her and dad were together, whereas a lot of my friends, like, in the estate, they, they didn't have a, they didn't have both a mum and a dad, so yes, we lived in a deprived area, but we had really, really, really tight family in our house and in our, you know, granny and grandad and everybody being close, so we were very privileged in that way, perhaps a lot of other people weren't and, and, you know, that has an impact, doesn't it.

JC: Yeah, I suppose having those support networks is really important.

CK: Yeah.

JC: And what about outside of school, what would you have done sort of for, for leisure?

CK: What age, like?

JC: Well, I suppose I'm thinking sort of primary school, early secondary school.

CK: Swimming, there was this big swimming pool in Ballymena and you would have went swimming on a Friday night, groups, you didn't really go to groups, like, you know, I've got a wee girl now and I've got one on the way and she's four and she's already been to ballet dancing, gymnastics, you know, like, swimming lessons, we didn't go to swimming lessons, we just went to the swimming pool and, so we did that once a week definitely, you went to your cousins and you played with them, dead basic, but you sat and watched TV most of the time, you ran about outside in a fun way, you know. It was an estate, but on one side of it were fields and there would have been cows and horses and things, so you, you really ran about outside, which kids don't get to do anymore. What else would we have done, I suppose that would have been it, swimming was the, we would, my aunt, my aunt always had a wee bit more money it seemed, but she would always take us to the cinema when there was something new out, so that was great, and as a family we would have went out for big dinners for people's, like, birthdays and things, that's the kind of memories I have, so less, like, now everything, and I'm the exact same, oh it's Christmas, let's buy a craft box for

the wee one, let's buy, there's no craft boxes bought for us, but we did make Christmas cards out of paper and, simple, simpler times, outside more, and less, less organised groups, and then when, when school, oh as well, we would have went to in the summer, a wee summer scheme in the community centre, which was brilliant actually, or at least my memory of it was brilliant, like, they had a wee disco on the last day and loads of, just activities and craft things set up. There was also little Bible groups and we weren't a religious family, but you just went to the Bible group cos that was the only activity that was on, so it would be in this, like, it was very strange, in a mobile home on, like, maybe it was Monday and Tuesday night and looking back it would have been a really right-wing preacher that stood up and gave you a good telling off for five minutes, but then you were allowed juice and a biscuit and to colour in a picture and that's what we liked to do, so.

JC: [laughs] So did you enjoy going to the Bible groups, then?

CK: Yeah, we just, I mean, no one listened to the actual preachy bit, all of it, and it, and it, and it was quite, I mean, it was a very, it would always have been a very strange character that had converted their shed and I mean, there would have been thirty children in it, so, like, a big mobile home or a shed, it was like something you would see in America now ,to be honest [laughs], and all the kids lined up and this, well, I mean, he wouldn't have been the minister of the church, but he would have been an affiliated person with the church, you know, ran a wee Bible group and would, and as I say, he would give you a good sermon at the start and then, yeah, we enjoyed, right, you just sat through that, didn't you, and then at the end you were allowed to do whatever wee activity they had on for you.

JC: Yeah, so it was the social aspect rather than the religious aspect that you were–

CK: Very much so, yeah.

JC: Attracted to, and you say you weren't a religious family, would you have gone to church at all, or, or was that just not a part of your life?

CK: My aunt was religious, so we went to Sunday school with her. She was a member of the local church, probably two minutes' walk from my house, it was a Baptist church, so I don't know quite, I mean, Baptist churches are quite plain in décor, yeah, so we went with her. She'd pick us up on a Sunday morning and we'd walk along and I think my mum and dad aren't really religious at all, but they would have came to our Sunday, what are they called, like, every, once a year, you would have a, the kids would do, like, at their Sunday school what they'd been learning, a wee song and this, so they would come along on those big days and I think we always got a bit of pressure because people in the church would talk to you and say oh you should come every week, and mum and dad wouldn't have announced it, that they're, they're not religious, however, they're not religious, but I would associate as probably atheist, but, but they would never say they don't believe in God, they would just say it's not talked about, would be their, you know.

JC: That's interesting. Was that the sort of thing that you wouldn't want to admit that you, you don't believe in God in the community?

CK: You wouldn't want to tempt it I think, it's, my family are, so Baptist Protes-, Protestant, you've clearly grasped that, you know, I've not even said chapel, but, like, people talk about Catholic guilt, but I think there's a religious guilt, even though my granny and grandad weren't religious either on, on definitely my dad's side, but yeah, you just wouldn't want to admit it just in case God spites you, you know, and that kind of, and, like, I am atheist and, you know, I've, I've, I definitely am, but, like, my partner, like, he would say things and I'm like, oh no, you can't say that, so even still I've got a wee tiny bit of it in me, that I'm like, oh no, but just don't say anything bad about God, I don't believe in any God, but please don't say anything bad just in case, whereas my mum and dad wouldn't even say they don't believe, just in case.

JC: That's interesting. Have you, have you always seen yourself as an atheist, or would you have believed in God when you were growing up?

CK: I can remember telling my auntie on a walk to nurse-, or to Sunday school, I can remember telling her that I was a Christian and I can remember knowing it was a lie, so that's my earliest memory of knowing that I didn't believe, whereas actually me telling her that I did believe in God, you know, that, so I knew, I knew it was a lie, that there was, I knew to lie about it for whatever reason, so yeah, I knew at that point I didn't believe.

JC: And how long would you have continued going to Sunday school, then?

CK: I kept going to Sunday school, probably until I was twelve.

JC: And then you just decided it wasn't for you?

CK: Yeah, probably from ten onwards I had been saying why do I have to go anym-, you know, I think just you wanted to lie on a wee bit on a Sunday morning.

JC: Yeah.

CK: You know, pretty much as simple as that, but, and, and my partner doesn't agree with this, the, as such, part of me's like, well, I would send my wee girl to Sunday school because, like, it instilled a lot of kind of disciplines in me, like, there was, there were positives, although the whole idea of it is wrong because I don't believe in what you're, what the teachings are, but it, you know, it was, you had to get up on a Sunday, you had to look a certain way, you had to wear something clean and fresh and you had to sing and you had to recite hymns and verses, so, like, a lot of memory-related things, I think it really added to my ability to, like, learn a poem or learn something, so I see a lot of benefits, but, yeah, like, for the last few years of it I was like, why do I have to go here, I don't believe in God anyway, yous don't go, would have be-, and so for a few years mum and dad kept it going and then it was **[00:20:00]** right, enough, you win.

JC: Yeah, no, that's interesting, and, so that was at a Baptist church. Was Ballymena predominantly a Protestant town, then?

CK: Very divided, but definitely, like, yes, definitely predominantly Protestant. There was a big chapel in Ballymena which has now been, d-, you know, taken down, many a riot at certain times were outside the chapel, like, in, this was after, even after the Good Friday Agreement I believe, so, so, like, it was a divided town, there was a chapel that people obviously actively went to, but it was predominantly Protestant, the chapel was in a Protestant area and that was a real hotbed of a lot of police involvement, commonly, people, and people were just going to the religious service on a Saturday night, so, yeah.

JC: Would you have known many Catholics growing up?

CK: Not until, no, no, actually, even, and even our, the grammar school would have been predominantly Protestant and you knew a handful of Catholic people, but you knew exactly who they were, I could name them today which is [indecipherable], and this is, you know, without me knowing if their families, like, I've reflected on this now, like, one girl I can think of that's doing really well and I sort of stay in touch with a bit, like, in my head I'm like, I know she's a Catholic and I don't know how I know that, you just know it, and I don't know that she's ever went to chapel, I don't know if her mum or dad are Ca-, but at school you just knew that she was a Catholic and everybody else wasn't.

JC: It's interesting you say that about the religious aspect because you, you know, stopped going to church and things, but you would still have been identified as a Protestant. It's a kind of strange thing about Northern Ireland in that you've got that religious label even if you're not religious.

CK: So strange, and I can't identify as Protestant now and, you know, I've got, like, when I talk about it I talk about Ireland, and my family are always like, Northern Ireland, and they even do it with the four-year-old, like, my wee girl, like, she'll say oh I'm going to Ireland and they'll say Northern Ireland, you know, it's that kind of di-, you know, needing to, so, so yeah, like, I, like, I'll say to my dad and stuff, not my aunts cos I wouldn't want, you know, maybe I wouldn't be as honest with them, but I'm like, well, I'm not a Protestant because I don't believe in one Protestant teaching, it's, you know, and I'm not religious, so how can I identify as that, but, but yeah, if you're born in Northern Ireland, whatever your family are, you, that's what you are.

JC: Yeah, you're always one or the other, and, and what would have been, I mean, you, you sort of said that you, you knew a few Catholics, but not that many. What would the general sort of perception of Catholics have been in your community, was there suspicion and prejudice at all?

CK: Not, weirdly not, I mean, I just know my family's views and there would have been jokes made, but there wouldn't have been a prejudice in that you could have always, if you did, if you were going out with a Catholic they would have been able to come home to your house with no issues whatsoever to all your family, there would have been a wee joke made, I don't know even know why, but, you know, not one of them are religious, apart from my aunt, a religious bone in their body, but they would have made a wee joke about, oh I don't remem-, be careful what you say, something like that, but, but it wouldn't have been an issue, there was no, the only other, maybe when you get a bit older, people's parents would

have discussed on a political point of view, like, Catholics having more children, so therefore outnu-, you know, in the future outnumbering votes, that kind of thing, and then discussions about, like, let's say Irish language, anybody from a Protestant upbringing would just be well against that, Irish language or Irish signs without an open conversation about, well, it's the language, why would you want to lose language, you know, but, but, so, so no prejudice, but deeply fixed views that still aren't really even changing. I suppose that is prejudice.

JC: Well, I suppo-, it depends how it manifests I guess, so would your parents have had those conversations with you about politics and stuff, would you have got a sense of what their political views were?

CK: At certain time, and in a, like, at certain times of the year when there was stuff on, you know, really topical things, like, you know, maybe a bomb or a, like, which, you know, like the Omagh bomb, for example, which was, or round the, the Twelfth of July when stuff was, like, kind of rearing its head again and there were, like, riots and barricades and, and stuff, yes, at that, at those points there would have been a small conversation of, yeah, but Clare, they, you know, and it would have been, they, they just want a united Ireland and then we'll all be speaking Ir-, you know, that kind of, which is kind of quite a big jump in my opinion to, and then, we'll all be speaking Irish, well, so what, and I don't think, like, Scotland have a massive agenda and put a lot of money into, like, Gaelic speaking, doesn't mean everybody speaks Gaelic or even, there's not even a plan that that will happen, it's just about not losing a language, but people don't see it like that at home, it's just, like, oh no, cos if that happens then they'll have the vote, and then they'll vote for stuff that we totally don't agree with, fear, just fear that then they'll have to leave, live a life that they don't agree with, so.

JC: Yeah, I think that's quite common among a lot of people who I'd identify as, as unionist, you know, this idea that their way of life's being taken away, and would you, would you have shared the views of your family or would you have had different ideas about current affairs and things?

CK: I think always different ideas. I mean, me and a, a friend who I, she came over, like, I was her friend from grammar school, her dad was actually in, like, parades, you know, Twelfth of July parades, so her family were, were quite extreme in that way, not extreme, but, not everybody's family went on the Orange, or, you know, the Orange walks, her dad did and we always just hated this, we were mortified by it. It was also because of, like, you know, kind of it's more deprived if your dad was actually in the bands, like, the doctors, the doctors didn't really, weren't really drummers in the bands, you know, so, like, at the school we went to it was just a bit embarrassing, even though everybody was Protestant, it was a bit, our upbringing was a wee bit embarrassing [pauses], so we always had different, we always wanted to get away [indecipherable], like, we had to get away and university was the way to get away.

JC: Okay, that's interesting.

CK: I think you've paused.

JC: Oh sorry, one second, yeah, it was, yeah, that's better now, it was just, it slowed down for me a second. Well, that's interesting you say that, so you wouldn't have been particularly involved with things like the Twelfth, then?

CK: Well, we did, we did, weirdly yeah, because, like, but we, but we wouldn't have, we wouldn't have admitted it in school, but my, another aunt did a big, I mean, it was a big house party she had on that day and then my friend always got a new outfit for that day, her, like, you know, her family would have been, when she was younger, would have followed her dad round on the walk, we would never have done that, when she was older that would have been mortifying, but we went to my [indecipherable], my aunt's house party. We would have seen the walk with my grandad and all the family, we would have sort of, like, I can remember eating burgers and really nice onions from a burger van, my friend always got a nice outfit, it was a day, you couldn't drive at all, so, around Ballymena, so you had to walk, like, all the roads were closed off, so it was like a party day, it was like Boxing Day or something, so we did get involved in that and as we got older, like, as we were probably fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, we probably just didn't mention it in the grammar school, that that's what we were doing, but we were, but whereas now, as soon as I came over to Scotland, I would never go home on Twelfth of July or around it, I would never be involved in that, and I also wouldn't go on that day cos I wouldn't want my family to see how uninvolved, like, I just wouldn't mention it, you know, but they'd be like, why's Clare sitting in the house when we're all up here.

JC: So would they, would they still go every year, then?

CK: Well, actually, since my grandad passed away probably a good few years ago now, so actually no, not anymore, and quite a lot of them go on holidays now just to get away from it, there, there's been a shift, I think the numbers have massively reduced anyway, but my family kind of can be annoyed with all the fuss and I suppose a older generation of people like my grandad, like, my grandad knew everybody, he was [indecipherable] cos he knew everybody in his community, they've passed on and it doesn't have the same nostalgia now it is the [indecipherable].

JC: Yeah, sorry, one second, no, that's, that's interesting and I think, yeah, you're right, like, I think the meanings of it have, have **[00:30:00]** shifted over time and stuff. I'm wondering when, when you were younger did you, were you aware of what the meanings that sort of underpinned the Twelfth and, and the parades were, or, or was it just, as you say, more like a party?

CK: Just a celebration day.

JC: Hmm.

CK: [indecipherable; extended pause] Can you see me, do you want me to call back?

JC: I-, yeah, I can s-, oh yeah, no, it's back now, I'm not sure what's going on here, one second.

CK: I can see [indecipherable].

JC: I think that's better, now.

CK: It's just quite quiet.

JC: Yeah, let me try, let me try leaving the meeting and then rejoining, that might be better. **[00:31:16]** [The two interview audio files were spliced together here].

CK: Cool, oh good, good, that's fine.

JC: Yeah, so you're probably sick of talking about it now, but we were, we were on the topic of the Twelfth and the parades and I suppose I just asked you when you kind of became aware of, of the meanings behind the parades and the, the Orange culture?

CK: Yeah, so I suppose, I mean, there was an awareness setting in in our, you know, secondary school ages twelve, thirteen, fourteen, but your family maybe, not overrode, your fam-, kind of decisions you made as a family just automatically continued to happen even though you were like, hmm, don't know if believe in all this, so there, there was, there was an awareness. You knew enough to, to understand why you paraded, you know, like, there's, like, a few historic, or landmarks that everybody would know, but generally you didn't, you kind of just didn't look into it too much until then, I maybe became, like, let's say eighteen, an adult, and you're like, hold on a minute, like, what am I parading for, and also you started to question, not one person parading had a religious backbone, you know, any religion and it was all this, oh people should be allowed to parade to their church that they go to once a day, that's the kind of, or once a year, that's the kind of thoughts that start coming into your head, like, they literally go to church never, apart from this one day and then it's essential that they get to parade from a field, from a field to a church, even if it's going through, like, you know, and causing distress in Catholic neighbourhoods and, well, actually causing a massive upheaval for every single town that's involved, and you start to think, well, is that really important, as important as what you maybe previously thought.

JC: And you mentioned at school that, where people were maybe more sort of middle class that there wouldn't have been as much enthusiasm for the Twelfth in that sort of community.

CK: Yeah, like, I, I mean, I think I'm right in saying this, but certainly my perception is that more affluent people, although they definitely would have agreed that the Twelfth should be allowed to continue, but they got less involved, or they became maybe, well, they became less involved. Now my family are less involved even now, but they maybe made that jump fifteen years before, so they would have went on holiday, for example, that would have been quite a common one, a lot them going to the, well, a lot of them had holiday houses, but, at the coast, so they would have went away from it all, but they would have believed it should still be able to happen, but they weren't supporting it. That, that kind of perception, whether that's accurate or not, I don't know, but, I do remember being at dinner in friends' houses, this would have been someone really, you know, definitely middle class, dad, dad a doctor, quite high up, and there, there would have been the discussions or

views that oh you need to vote because, because they all vote, that kind of discussion, and so I know, I know their belief roughly speaking in that way. However, I know they always went away around the Twelfth, so they had already opted out of that big occasion, and it became, it became more a pub day out, you know, it was a bit kind of, it, it, I think it's quite a, a sad state of affairs now really, it's not the community thing and it, you know, a lot of people are drunk and they're wearing, rather than what they would have been wearing, suits and they'd have been suited and booted more in my grandad and my parents' time, but then, now it's, like, Rangers tops, you know, it's not, it's not this community day out where people dress well and look well and look their best and be smart and–

JC: Yeah, you do, I mean, I'm, I live in Belfast and you do get the impression sometimes that it's almost more of a booze-up than a-, than anything else really.

CK: Yeah, and, like, there would have been booze at my aunt's house when, but, but it wasn't a booze-up, or anything near it, like, they would have had wine or whatever, I don't know what they were having, but, yeah, it wasn't a booze-up when we were young, but now it does seem to be like that, however. I, like, I stopped going when I moved over here and maybe, like, as an interesting, it would be interesting for me to go as, like, a fly on the wall and see if it has changed cos I'm saying it's changed, but I don't actually know that, my, my feelings have changed, like, and I, my thoughts, I think it has changed as well, like, and what evidence I do have, you know, but I've, but I've not been, so it's maybe a bit unfair of me to make all these grand, kind of, oh it's changed, well, how do you know.

JC: When was the last time you went to the Twelfth, do you think, have you any idea?

CK: Probably, probably when I was seventeen.

JC: Right, okay, so yeah, no, that's interesting. Well, maybe you can, once Covid's over maybe you can make a return and see if it, see if it has changed.

CK: I feel like I would need to go incognito for whatever reason, cos I would be embarrassed and cos I don't actually agree with it. It would be, like, too, it would be like me going to other, you know, rallies that I really don't agree with now, so I feel like I would have, like, go in disguise, but it maybe, it would, maybe would be interesting just to go.

JC: Just to see, yeah.

CK: But, like, I never want my daughter to see that.

JC: That's interesting.

CK: So, yeah.

JC: Yeah, so you want to, you kind want to keep her shielded from that, that aspect of Northern Irish culture?

CK: Yeah.

JC: Okay. Can we talk a little bit about, we, you sort of touched on it earlier, but the transition that you had to make from, from primary school, where it was mostly people from your estate, to secondary school which was further away and perhaps people from a, a different sort of background. How, how did you adjust to that, was that transition difficult?

CK: I remember, it was difficult, my main memory of the difficulty was actually, I went from being, like, doing really well in primary school, like, you know, the teachers said oh you'll pass your eleven-plus no bother, you'll pass it no bother, and being the top of my class and winning all these, you know, I mean, the fact, me winning awards is ridiculous, but a history award, mathematics award and English award at primary school, and then I went, went to the grammar school and I was lost because people knew so much more than me, so it felt like that thing that people get when they go to university, and they immerse themselves in more, like, cleverer people. I felt that when I was eleven going to the grammar school and I didn't feel it as much to university, so there was that change and, but the, the other change in the kind of going, like, I think you were changing your social status, if you know what I mean, from, to a different level of affluence. I, I knew that before I went, so that didn't shock me, well, you were well prepared for that, you knew that you were going to be in the minority.

JC: Was it easy enough to fit in sort of socially?

CK: Och it was becau-, for me more than brother, my, I suppose you just go with your strengths, if you know what I mean, and I was chatty, a girl, like, you know, I don't know, there was no, there was no issues, for, for me, it could have been different, it, it was different for my brother, my brother didn't ever fit in, even though he was very intelligent, but he maybe just didn't, like, I, my strengths were more from a social point of view, so I just started to hang about with loads of friends and go out with loads of boys, and I don't mean that, like, I'm not, don't want you to make any assumptions, but that, that's the truth, that's how I kind of, a bit of survival, you know, you just, you got, like, your boyfriends and that was your connections and your links, and, and loads of friends that were girls as well, so it was, socially I just became a bit of, that, that's how I fitted in, but let's say I had been of a more, I, I would, I would have been quite confident at the age of the eleven, probably more, a lot more so than now actually. Looking back you think, my goodness, because now if I was going to a situation where people were a lot different than me I would, I would maybe struggle, then I didn't for whatever reason, I was like, I'm here, I got in, let's all be friends and let's hang about together, and that kind of worked fine.

JC: It sounds like you got on pretty well there and you, and you me-, you said it was a mainly Protestant school. Was there ever any, any sort of tension between, like, if there were any Catholic schools in the area? I know, I know a lot of people, for a lot of people the uniform was kind of like a–

CK: A symbol.

JC: Yeah, an identifier.

CK: Yeah, no, not, not for ours. I mean, you would have known for sure that our school was a Protestant school and then, you knew exactly the uniforms that were from the Catholic school, but we, there was no, we didn't actually cross paths much at all and because it was quite a, like, we weren't allowed out of school even until we were eighteen doing our A-levels, we weren't allowed out at lunchtime, so there was no, there was no fighting, there was no, cos you were in, you were in your own school at lunchtime. Maybe in Belfast in certain areas it would have been a bit more of hotbed for that, but Ballymena wasn't, the Catholic school was at another end of the town and we really didn't have any, we, we didn't even play the same sports, so there wasn't that kind of sporting rivalry, like, literally played different sports, we would have been rugby, they would have been, like, camogie or hurling, so, so they didn't, it didn't happen in a sports side of view, it didn't happen in a geography point of view because the Catholic school was in a more Catholic area, and it was a very good high school as well, it was the same eleven-plus system, but, **[00:41:16]** and I actually don't know anybody from, from that school, there, there was no crossover, no paths crossed, just really unfortunate actually. Maybe if I'd stayed on and then went to, like, university in Northern Ireland somewhere, you would have been meeting more people at that point, but, you know, you just stuck to your own school, like, fighting at our school, bullying happened, but fighting didn't, it was really quite, open fighting like that didn't really happen, it wasn't, it wasn't a, wouldn't have been tolerated at all, so.

JC: And it sounds like you were sort of quite good academically. I'm wondering when you first sort of, had the idea that you wanted to go to university?

CK: Well, I think I was good academically in primary school, but not so much in secondary school. I, like, I was, I wouldn't have been bottom of the class because I think there is a thing that girls are quite often more studious than, than boys, and I wouldn't have allowed myself to be at that level, but you can't always put, you can't always decide where you put yourself academically, so at secondary school I was never, certainly never doing particularly well. I was just doing enough to get by for the next stage, the next GCSE or A-levels and I always knew I wanted to go to university, it wasn't, but luckily the sch-, our school didn't, there was no options and considerations of not, it was, like, it was discussed in a way before fifteen, before you even picked your GCSEs, it was, like, be careful what GCSEs you pick because remember universities are looking, that'll impact the A-levels you can pick, so you were already geared up to that way of thinking, like, UCAS forms were being discussed in our school when we were fourteen, oh do the Duke of Edinburgh because that's good bec-, for your, isn't it a UCAS form, the application for university, I'm saying that now and I'm–

JC: Yeah, it was, definitely was when I went.

CK: Yes, but they were discussed and whereas at the high school that wasn't an option, it wasn't discussed, it wouldn't have been in people's vocabulary, but luckily I was in a place and it was just, like, oh where, where, what kind of area do you want to go to university in, would have been probably the first question more than what you want to study, and then it would have been, you know, what, what A-levels are you picking so you can go to university, but I feel so pri-, so lucky that that's just the people I was about because it meant that you weren't thinking of, will I or won't I go to university, you were just thinking, well, I better do this to get to university, and that was my get out, that was my–

JC: Yeah, that's interesting, so what, did you ever consider going to Queen's or anywhere, or did you always know that you wanted to get out of Northern Ireland?

CK: Unfortunately, it was get out of Northern Ireland, and I would, if my family heard, my dad would know that now, I'm dead close to my dad, but if some of my family members heard that, that, that would sound really hurtful, so I wouldn't say that to them, but I know and my best friend that came over to Scotland for university knows that is very much our main prerogative, and there was six university, you applied to, no, did you apply for, to three or six, don't really remember, but all of our applications were in, there were some in maybe, like, Leeds, but most of them were in Scotland because it was close geographically, and, you know, they were offering the subjects at that point that we would have wanted, but they were all outwith Northern Ireland.

JC: And why was it important for you to leave at that stage?

CK: I think there was a bit of, there was, there was a massively wanting to get away just to be your own person and, and maybe some of that became from us pretending through our school years that we weren't as, from a, a deprived an area that we were, and at least when you get away to university, well, you can just pretend to be whoever you are. Now I'm quite proud and open about it, but I wouldn't have been saying to people when I was thirteen, I'm from an estate, you know, that, like, it's easy for me to say that now with a bit of distance between it, so it was about getting away, and it's about getting away from your family and all the, the nonsense of living in Northern Ireland and there's, now I can't wait to get home to my family, but I, I wouldn't want to live there, like, there was other stuff going on, you know, more kind of domestically, that we just really wanted away from, and I don't mean, nothing, like, no inherent evilness, but, like, you know, my mum and dad have since split up and the girl I'm talking about had, her mum and dad had split up, so there were kind of more internal reasons for us just wanting away from all that nonsense, to really just be who, who we were.

JC: Yeah, people often say university's kind of a time when you can reinvent yourself and have that sort of freedom, so it definitely makes sense to me why you would want to leave home to do it. I'm wondering, cos I mean, some of the people I talk to say they wanted to leave because of the whole Catholic-Protestant divide and the Troubles and stuff, was that a factor in your decision at all, or was it more as you were saying?

CK: Yes, yes, it definitely was cos you knew that, by that stage you were like, this is a lot of nonsense, and, you know, you'd maybe started to hear about more progressive politics and yeah, like, you know, discussions about abortion, that you still can't have openly. I mean, this is, like, a quite, it's not an aunt, but it's someone quite far out, like, a Facebook post she put up, I nearly couldn't believe it the other day, and it was, it was actually an anti-abortion post, so you still can't have open discussions and that's not the Catholic or Protestant thing, but it's more just the kind of, like, what's the opposite of progressive, like–

JC: Sort of, yeah–

CK: Backwards.

JC: Social conservatism, yeah.

CK: Yeah, or social conserve-, yeah, absolutely, so that I would say would have been a massive percentage, the social conservativism, but the, and, and coming into that would have been the kind of, you know, disagreement in the Catholic-Protestant divide or even starting to associate with the fact of, I am none of them, so, I don't even want to associate with any religious group and then part of it would have been, like, your kind of own family circumstances, cos I can remember my dad saying Clare, there's a foreman in my work and he's got twin daughters and he has told them that they both have to apply to universities in Belfast, you know, he doesn't want his daughter, like, so, but they were really trying to keep me, why don't you, you know, apply for Belfast and then you'll be close, you can even move up to Belfast, but it just seemed too close for me, so it clearly wasn't far away enough and it wasn't away from, you know, other nonsense, which would have been my opinion, so yeah, it just, it had to be across the water for me and I can remember saying to my dad, and this is probably really cruel, yeah, but her dad'll probably pay for her student halls and her university, so then, like, at that point mum and dad's hands were tied because they couldn't financially provide, you know, I was getting a student bursary or whatever, so they literally, literally had to just let me apply for wherever I want. I think it broke their heart at the point, but my dad couldn't be happier for me now in the life that I've set up and even, it's by no means an amazing big life, but it's, it's my life and it's, you know, and he loves getting over to Glasgow and loves the hustle and bustle and whatnot, so.

JC: Did your, had your brother been to university or, or did he stay?

CK: He, he went to university, my, he did media, weirdly, and he's a very, very, very shy guy, so he actually failed university, which was a bit, like, kind of, a bit hurtful even saying that, but I think it was his third year or fourth year and he just stopped going. He was living at home at that point and I can remember, would I have been still at school or maybe just going home for the summers, and, you know, it was clear he was just spending more time on his computer and in the bedroom and mum would be like, he's not going to university, yeah, I know he's not going to his classes, but you don't have very many classes at uni sometimes, so you maybe don't have to go many days, and then it came out that he'd actually failed which was, like, my brother doesn't need to fail any exam, he just, I mean, he was, I think he was lost in the social aspect of it, plus he was commuting from Ballymena to Belfast, it just, being a subject, the subject choice that was wrong for his kind of confidence levels, so since that he's went and, like, done pre-op-, pre-optometry, so he works as, like, it's not an optometrist, but he works in doing pre-optometry, so he does quite well for himself in a, in a subject that's maybe a wee bit more suited to his personality.

JC: Yeah, no, I was asking because I was wondering if you were the, the first one to sort of leave home and it, it sounds like you were, so that's maybe why your, your parents were so desperate to, to try and, like, persuade you to–

CK: Keep me.

JC: Yeah, go to, go to uni in Belfast or something, what, what–

CK: And we were very close, like, we were close, we still are close, like, but, you know, as much as I would disagree and fight and shout and stuff with them, like, I was kind of always with them and hanging about and every family event I'd be there, right, you know, so we were very, very close, so they, they definitely wanted to keep me as close as possible I would say, when I was eighteen.

JC: And what subject did you end up studying?

CK: Well, I did business economics, but probably the totally wrong choice for me, and then, like, didn't get a job in that, didn't even apply for a jobs in that area, so went back and did a masters in social work.

JC: Right, okay.

CK: So social work's what I should have done from school probably, that or, or nursing, but **[00:51:16]** those kind of subjects wouldn't have been mentioned so much at our school.

JC: So it was much more the traditional sort of academic subjects that they were focused on?

CK: Very much so.

JC: Yeah.

CK: Very much so. However, I wouldn't change a minute of the, the, like, the progression I've had because it kind of suited me from other areas, it allowed me, like, just doing business economics allowed me to travel and meet loads of people and also, now when I meet social workers that are social workers at twenty-two I think oh my goodness, thank goodness I wasn't at twenty-two, cos it did me an extra ten years just being able to, you know, do other things, so I like that, I, it was a stepping stone to a postgrad, that's the way I see it, you know, your undergrad.

JC: Yeah, and why did you pick Glasgow specifically?

CK: It was between Glasgow and Edinburgh was the, like, the final and I can remember visiting Glasgow beforehand, liking it, I don't know any reason why, I don't know how I came to a decision, Glasgow over Edinburgh, but I know Scotland was because it was closer geographically, oh it was, it was like, well, you can get the boat or a flight if you need to home, and I have done many a time, so close enough, but far away enough.

JC: Yeah, no, that makes sense actually, and how did you feel about leaving home? I mean, you were presumably excited, but maybe also a bit apprehensive as well, I don't know?

CK: Yeah, like, I think excited, excited and the gifts and, you know, like, like, you know, your family buying you different, different things, it was a really, really sweet time actually, you

know, and coming with wee, a hundred pound in an envelope and all that kind of thing, so very exciting. Mum and dad both came over with me and I can remember them leaving me outside halls and mum bawling her eyes out like a total drama queen, like, as if she was at my funeral, but fair enough, you know, like, I think just closing the door on your wee girl and walking away must be quite difficult, even though I probably phoned them three hours later, you know, so, like, there was a, there was a closeness there, although, less so, I didn't have a mobile at the start, which I can really not believe, but there was a ha-, there was a phone in the, you know, the accommodation, so, yes, very excited, you know, when mum and dad did walk away there was a bit of, like, you know, feeling a bit flat for a minute or two, but then after that everybody was just, like, talking about fresher's week, so it was really quite exciting, it was the best thing in the world and I can remember going home at Christmas and everybody being, like, shocked, just at the weight I had put on. I mean, I'm not a big person in any, in any way, manner or form, but just between what, September and Christmas, cos you'd just been out, well, it was partying then, like, boozing and eating chips on the way home and just became really quite unhealthy looking probably quite quickly and then that just kind of plateaued and you start, like, going swimming or whatever you do, but at the start it was just, like, it was a party that would have got you through and meeting everybody and it was, yeah, it was great, not as much the academic side of the things, like, that's not in my memory of, you know, early university experience, at all, and I did an exchange year in Canada and I was so shocked by how quickly, like, it's really studious, you know, and I really liked their take on it, I was like, oh actually I should be in the library, and that's where they meet people, having coffees in the library, whereas in Glasgow at least, you know, it was just going to as few classes as you could and it wasn't like you were spending the rest of your time productively, cos you weren't.

JC: [laughs] Well, it sounds like the typical student experience, then.

CK: Yeah, typical, I mean, just a waste of everybody's money and time, but it, if you, if you stick with it, you know, it gets you, you do learn enough, you do your, you do enough to get you through each year and then you probably really decide where you want to go, third, fourth year.

JC: And what about Glasgow as a city and, and the people there, how did you find that?

CK: Very, very like the people at home, I would say, people in Glasgow, and the number of cities in the UK that you could probably say that of, like, you know, working-class backgrounds, kind of shipyard and shipbuilding backgrounds and, and things like that, but Glasgow in comparison to home was, it was a, you know, it still is a university city, so the, the kind of gigs and pubs and clubs and restaurants, I mean, you're just like, wow, when you're from somewhere quite small, or even, Belfast is really, like, you know, quite a, a big affair now, but even in comparison to Belfast Glasgow really is something else, like, the gigs alone or the shopping, and people come and they come over here, or regularly come over for, like, shopping trips and things, so Glasgow's got a lot to offer in that way, so loved, you know, loved the people because I think they're quite like people at home, the, as for the kind of, people talk about [indecipherable] possibly Frankie Boyle talking about, like, a sectarian city, I don't, I know Glasgow is like that, but I don't know anybody that, that supports any of the football teams or gets involved in, in that side of Glasgow, so I think

although Glasgow, I know, is very divided, I'm not, like, naive to that, I have never seen a Twelfth of July parade, I don't know anybody that wears a Rangers or Celtic top, I do know some, I know people and they support their football teams, but, so it's not the same as at home.

JC: Yeah, I was going to ask you about that because it's obviously got that divide as well. I'm wondering what you think the similarities or the differences are between, sort of that part of Scotland and Northern Ireland?

CK: Well, Scotland's more progressive in so many ways, like, the, even the, like, the discussions, like, Gaelic language, that's not an emotive discussion in Glasgow the way it is at home, how people associate religion, I don't, I mean, none, my friends aren't religious, so they don't associate as anything, but if someone says that they go to chapel on a Christmas Eve cos their family always did that, you know, it's just, like, an open conversation of, oh it's, like, you know, are your parents Catholic, whereas you automatically knew, know that in Northern Ireland, you don't automatically know it in Glasgow as much, or at least the people I, I suppose I've more chosen my friends now, that's maybe the difference, whereas when you are from somewhere your friends are from your area, your school, you know, you've kind of got the same background, whereas now, you know, my friends are, probably do go to chapel on Christmas Eve, but they're Greek, so it's different, you know, or different, like, kind of different backgrounds, so that's my experience of Glasgow. Maybe if I was born and bred here it would be a bit more interwoven, into kind of how I feel about the religious divide, but because I came here as a university student picking and choosing friends along the way kind of, it's a bit different.

JC: Yeah, that's interesting, and it sounds, like, from your experience, it was a lot less, it was a lot less stark maybe than it would have been in Northern Ireland, the whole divide, or it, or it didn't matter as much maybe.

CK: Yeah, I think it didn't matter as much and I think there's more opportunities which, opportunities really are what bring people away from that kind, kind of way of thinking, like, my partner, for example, isn't from a great area and would say that people would've had a fight at school about Rangers or Celtic, that would have been, like, the divide that he talks about. However, he was never into football and more into going to gigs and playing the guitar, so it never really influenced his life, but remember, gigs stopped in Northern Ireland for years and years and years and years, so there wasn't, there wasn't that kind of, like, he was, he's been to the coolest gigs since he was age fourteen onwards, that, that wasn't po-, that wasn't possible in Northern Ireland, so you didn't have the same get-out, like, university, yes, there's Queen's and there's universities in Belfast, but anybody can go to college or university in Glasgow, there's more options.

JC: Yeah, sure.

CK: You can work in hospitality, you can get really cool jobs doing different things, even kind of, like, skateboarding or going about on your bike, things like that, you know, as an adult, didn't really happen in a, well, it doesn't happen in small towns, you're a weirdo if you go about on your bike in Ballymena, whereas in, in Glasgow it's, you know, it's how you get

around and it's, it's a lifestyle sort of, so there's more opportunities in a bigger city, and I think even Belfast's like that, like, you don't see many people, like, I suppose, I, I don't know why I'm talking about the bike for an example, but it's just different lifestyle choices that you can make, like, would be quite European in a way.

JC: Well, I suppose that's, yeah–

CK: You know, everybody–

JC: That's sort of the urban aspect, as well.

CK: Yeah, uh huh, but, but Belfast's urban, but people don't, and, and I'm not saying people don't have bikes in Belfast, but they don't have that lifestyle as much, you know, like, coffee cultures and going about on your bike and, so, yeah, Glasgow's **[01:01:16]** definitely more progressive in that, in loads of ways, Scotland's more progressive, so Glasgow being a big city within, but it's interesting that to get away from the sectarianism I come to Glasgow, I mean, that just sounds ridiculous.

JC: Yeah, I mean, I mean, a lot of people sort of think of Glasgow and Northern Ireland as being the sa-, the same in that respect, but it's interesting the way you've kind of shown that they are, they are actually very different in a lot of ways.

CK: Yeah.

JC: Were you ever, like, on the receiving end of any stereotypes or prejudices about Northern Irish people or about Northern Irish Protestants, was that ever, ever an issue that came up?

CK: No, but if, let's say I had maybe lived in a different area of the town and been going to that school, maybe would have been, but no, I wasn't, but, well, maybe cos most of the people I would have known, all the people I would have known, I mean, if a handful would have been Protestant, so, yeah, not on the receiving end because just there wasn't a diver-, I didn't have a diverse group of friends.

JC: But what about when you moved over to Glasgow?

CK: No, cos it just wasn't mentioned at that point. I would have said I'm not religious at all, and the more you got to know friends you would have said oh my family, you know, associates Protestant and you'd have been making a lot of excu-, like, early days I'd have been making a lot of excuses for my family, like, oh they would, they do this, but they're nice people, you know, that kind of discussions. I suppose as you get a bit older you stop making excuses and, you know, people are who they are, so, no, I di-, I wasn't ever on the receiving end of anything like that and at university no one I hung about with cared one way or another, is the truth of the matter, so there was no, yeah, there was no discussions that were particularly evocative or anything.

JC: I suppose that's a good thing about hanging around with students is it's usually a more open-minded group of people.

CK: However, maybe not in Belfast, I don't know, like, like, for example, and I still wouldn't say, but, but I, like, would have a socialist point of view now and, like, even, even watching *The Crown* and having general discussions with family members at home, like, they still have a belief in things that I'm like, really, you know, yous believe in, like, monarchy and, you know, the British Commonwealth and I'm like, think of what Britain has done to other countries, so I associate and affiliate more with, like, the socialists which would have been the Ca-, Catholic movement in Northern Ireland, a united Ireland, I mean, definitely, but my family definitely wouldn't associate with that, like, they would still, so, for example, Scottish independence was a large kind of discussion point and they would all be, now I can't believe you, you know, are voting for Scottish independence, that would mean we would, like, you know, as if there was nearly an implication that therefore, there would be a united Ireland, and I'm like, woah, it's different, but also what would be the big problem, is it that you don't agree with the politics of Ireland, or is it just that you don't want a united Ireland because you've always said that and, you know, you don't want it, but if you think about Scottish independence, that, like, I've never seen a breakdown of what Catholics and Protestants in Scotland voted, cos that'd be the first thing you, that would be the thought in Northern Ireland, if there was a referendum tomorrow, we would literally just see every Protestant voting, you know, to stay in Northern Ireland and, so, yeah, whereas I've never seen those discussions in Scotland, I've never seen that breakdown, whereas you see breakdown by areas, by cities, by, you know, different, other, you know, other measures.

JC: Yeah, Labour and Conservative sort of thing, yeah.

CK: Yeah.

JC: No, that's interesting, and I think people do sort of equate the movement for a united Ireland with the movement for Scottish independence, but as you say, they are, they are quite different in a lot of ways.

CK: Yeah.

JC: So you, you would be, you would be pro-independence?

CK: Pro-independence.

JC: And pro-Irish unification?

CK: I think so. I mean, I would need, I don't think that that would be my vote to make at this point in time, but, you know, just in a kind of, like, kind, I don't know, even how to, in theory, yes, that would certainly be my, my views, for, you know, a united Ireland, but I just don't, I don't feel that it would fair to me make, to make those, that decision, you know, but, and I would need to look into it a wee bit more and the politics associated, but I mean, Northern Ireland politics is always at a standstill, it's–

JC: Sure.

CK: Like, it's, it's funny to say that Ireland, who's led by potentially historically the church more, is more progressive than Northern Ireland, but that just–

JC: Well–

CK: More progressive with loads of things.

JC: Well, they've legalised–

CK: Gay marriages.

JC: Yeah, same sex marriage and abortion were legalised quicker there than in Northern Ireland.

CK: Yeah.

JC: And do you still have those kind of conversations about current affairs and politics with your family, or is that something you, you would try and avoid?

CK: I do. This'll be a bit of a, you'll be like, woah, curveball, so my dad is, my dad's married to a man, him and Colin got married last, two years ago, so since I've came to university, while life's changed and my dad has come out as gay, so I love having conversations with, like this with him because I'll say dad, think what, like, you know, your life choices in Northern Ireland has done you no favours, in a way, cos you know, having to live, live essentially a life of kind of, a hidden life, and, like, why would you agree with the politics of somewhere like that, but he would, him and his partner and I have them, the conversations with both of them, like, his partner would be very Northern Ireland, Southern Ireland, you know, that would be his, so he's from a Protestant upbringing, him, but I'm like, there's not one part of you that's really, you know, you can challenge them on it a wee bit more, but still overriding their personal belief and their lifestyle is the Protestant and Catholic side of things, and that if you don't vote a certain way it's a wasted vote and I'm like, but that certain way that you're talking about, don't believe in your lifestyle or any of your friends' lifestyle, or–

JC: Yeah, it is, it is mad, so would, do you think they would be DUP supporters?

CK: Well, there's been stuff the DUP have said more recently that they would, they wouldn't vote DUP now.

JC: Right.

CK: But they would've, they would have done, yes.

JC: Yeah, it is just interesting how people can arrive at that conclusion, like, I think I saw a documentary a while back where there was a woman whose daughter was gay and, and she was saying how supportive she was of it, but then said she'd still vote DUP because she

didn't want a united Ireland and, and, as you say, that kind of overrides everything really for a lot of people.

CK: Yeah, yeah, and that, that would be the same as, you know, as my dad and his partner. However, there, there have been, I can't remember what comment the DUP have made, but really flipping backward ones, more recently, and I think even though other political groups may feel that way, the DUP are that, well, stupid in my opinion, they've come out and said things that are so, like, I mean, they're ridiculous, but, so I think now they wouldn't vote DUP, they would, they would literally not be able to put their pen to paper, but they would vote for another group that wouldn't, you know, be taking forward the case for a united Ireland, and if push came to shove, if, let's say there was two, two political parties in the running, I don't know that they definitely wouldn't vote DUP, if they, you know, if it was that conversation that was a definite.

JC: That's really interesting.

CK: Yeah.

JC: And how, I mean, obviously it's not the main focus of the interview, but I'm, I'm curious as to how the local community and stuff and your dad, your, your family would have reacted to your dad coming out?

CK: Well, he moved to Belfast, so the, so the local community wasn't, it was a no-go I would say, it wasn't, he wasn't going to be able to come out in Ballymena, his, his family and all, I mean, they're all dead close and they were all at the, the civil partnership and, you know, they love Colin and dad and they've seen dad go through hard times with it because he never came out to my grandad, for example, and my grandad passed away and that's quite difficult, you know, your dad passing and him not knowing for sure what, what your kind of life choices are. I mean, my dad's sixty-something now, so he's not, like, he's not a young, a young man, but, so, like, from a family point of view I would say they took their time to process it, but they, they've all supported dad, but from a community point of view he doesn't really hang about in Ballymena much anymore, apart from visiting his family, and Belfast, you know, is where his, him and his partner live now, so Belfast's obviously a bit more accepting and he's more anonymous in Belfast.

JC: Yeah, true.

CK: So, so he can just, but I would say that there are examples of, one aunt on my dad's side wrote a big letter and wasn't coming to the civil partnership, she's from Ballymena, and these are the reasons why and, you know, so there's definitely people that don't agree with his lifestyle choices, yeah.

JC: And you've been, you've been going back to Northern Ireland regularly since you left, have you?

CK: Yeah, **[01:11:16]** really regularly, and maybe even more so since my wee girl was born. I've not, not been over in ages obviously at the minute.

JC: Yeah, sure.

CK: But, yeah, just [indecipherable], you know, more flying back and forth now for a weekend. If I stay too long I do start to, there is a backward kind of way people think and I don't know if that's just my family, so, so I love being there for a few days, but I love getting back as well.

JC: Yeah, it's interesting, and I'm, I'm wondering, one of the questions we always ask people is, is where you would consider to be your home now, because you sort of said earlier that you love going home to see your family, but referring to Northern Ireland, but you'd also said you wouldn't want to live there, so I'm wondering where you would see as home now?

CK: As home, I, and I use the term, like, inter-, home interchangeably with Northern Ireland and here. When I'm going to Northern Ireland I say I'm going home, when I'm over there I say I'm going home, so it doesn't, like, there's no, there's no sense in that, many a time I have thought about, like, well, you know, you get a mortgage in Glasgow and then you look up house prices in Northern Ireland and see what you could be getting, so I look, look up that kind of thing and I'm like, oh wow, you know, you could have a big, big house with a garden for the same as the, the flat that we've got here, so, so there's always that comparison in my head and maybe sometimes it's kind of a financial comparison, and I think oh it would be good for my daughter to hang about with the cousins and, you know, and their kids, cos she loves when she gets over there because it's just, every house is a house full of children and that, it's quite, it would be quite supportive for me, cos there's loads of aunts that would have, you know, babysitting duties would never be an issue.

JC: Yeah.

CK: But it, it's not, it's not even come, it's nearly, like, a kind of dreamy thing that I'm, when I'm considering it I would, if I actually think about the practicalities of living somewhere like that and the conversations that happen in workplaces and I'm just like, no, not into it.

JC: Yeah, so it's almost a bit more of like an idealised notion that you would get.

CK: Yeah, very much so.

JC: Yeah, mm hmm, that's interesting.

CK: And maybe, you know, you never know, like, I find that you don't, when you're retired I think you can choose your life differently, so you never know, like, when you're retired you might just want to be, you know, living in a kind of hometown in, you know, spending your days, cos you're not, you're not kind of working and it's a bit different when you're retired, there's the different choices than, like, bringing up kids, but I definitely don't want to bring up children in Northern Ireland.

JC: Why's, why is that, do you think? I that still because of the attitudes that persist over there?

CK: Yeah, yeah, like, the children that I, the lovely wee cousins' kids that I know and, I mean, they know 'The Sash', they'd even know, like, they know that song, they don't go to the Twelfth, so I don't, but they just know that tune from a young age and I just don't like that, and I don't like anything associated by it and I mean, my family kind of roll their eyes, say och Clare, so, I just don't want that for, yeah, for children, or, or the groups that they go to are still, like, I went to a BB display of my cousin's wee boy, that was the group in the area, so whereas my wee girl goes to ballet, I mean, she's no ballet dancer, you want to see her, but it's just the class down at the bottom of the road, the class down at the bottom of their road is BB and I went to the wee display and they carry a Union Jack down the middle of the, it's in a church, the display, so I'm like, oh my God, really, you know, that the kids are carrying a big Union Jack flag and that's just the group he goes to to play his football, so it's reasonable that you would go there, that's the choice that we've got, but look at, look at what that is steeped in, what history that's steeped in.

JC: Yeah.

CK: And I just, I just wouldn't want that, I, like, no one else noticed it and I'm like, oh my goodness.

JC: Yeah, and you probably get a, more of a perspective on that sort of thing having lived away for so long as well.

CK: Yeah, you do, mm hmm.

JC: Do you think Northern Ireland has changed much since you left?

CK: In some ways I would say yes in that, like, I, I'm visiting my dad in Belfast and that's, Belfast has changed dramatically and it's, like, quite cosmopolitan and they have a great life in Belfast, but when I think of points of view, I would have to say no, it's not changed, it's so stagnant. There's the eleven-plus, now I didn't know much about it again, but until my wee cousin was doing it and there that reared its head and all the difficulties of, of those stresses, of having to have their choices predetermined when you're very young, so that's not changed. Politics is often at a standstill and still there's conversations about, like, well, gay mar-, like, marriage has actually just passed, like, lit-, you know, you can, like, within the last few months civil partnership was obviously legalised in, but a few years ago now, but very recent, very, very recent history, so has it changed, a wee bit, but not, like, not without dragging its heels.

JC: Sure, yeah.

CK: And have, has everybody changed, no, like, certainly not, whereas no one I know from, like, more later life, Glasgow life, would have the same viewpoints that people commonly have in Northern Ireland, even, like, racism I would say is more prevalent, now that, that can't be accurate because I know there's massive, like, issues in, in loads of UK cities, but no one I speak to in Glasgow holds racist viewpoints, but people I speak to Northern Ireland commonly do hit out with kind of crazy right-wing statements, conservative based.

JC: Yeah, no–

CK: Staunch, staunch conservative.

JC: Yeah, no, it's interesting, and I think that, that is something that distinguishes Scotland and Northern Ireland in way is that, is that sort of social conservatism.

CK: Very much so, yeah, yeah, massive, massive difference, even look at how, you know, like, Nicola Sturgeon would have discussions about, like, the asylum seeking community and support for the asylum seeking community and, you know, the words that are used and the kind of non-judgemental terminology and then very, like, there was a, a recent incident, I don't know if you remember it, but it was in one of the hotels during lockdown and there was a, an, an incident, I believe people were, were they killed, I mean, I should know the ins and outs of it, but it was someone, it was an asylum seeker, like, the hotel was set up for asylum seekers and very quickly everybody in Northern Ireland had a viewpoint on how wrong this is because people are being let into the country, but this is one, this is one person who had a mental health breakdown, this isn't a, you know, and people in Scotland weren't talking about it in the way and people in Northern Ireland were talking about it, so there is, there is that real fear, like, oh look, look this is what happens if you have an open door policy and no one's got this open border, door policy, these are people that quite often, you know, like, actually come illegally and, because they're in war-torn countries, so I suppose people have that viewpoint in Northern Ireland that I don't think they all do in, in Scotland, there's obviously quite a high number of people that, that do have viewpoints like that, so I'm being a bit unrealistic maybe, but.

JC: But it's definitely, yeah, more, more prevalent in Northern Ireland.

CK: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, great, so before we finish up, could you tell me a bit more about what you did after your undergrad? You mentioned you did a mas-, a masters in social work, was it?

CK: Yeah, so after undergrad, yeah, so, like, quite recently, I was, what was I, thirty-one when I started it, maybe, maybe not, maybe, anyway, so round about thirties, so a, a masters in social work at another Glasgow university.

JC: What did you do in be-, in between time, after you finished your undergrad and then before starting the masters?

CK: Just, like, I've worked jobs, but I wouldn't, no real job associated massively with my, well, none with business economics, but, like, working for the NHS in procurement, so I did that for a while, moved to Australia for a year, did, like, six months backpacking in Asia, with the money from Australia, so kind of travelling, like, and to an extent, but only for a few years, so, but the year before that you're, you're just doing as much work, you're working, well, working for the NHS and then working at night to try and save, so you can leave and go

to Australia, so, yeah, that, that probably doesn't cover all the years, but that, that is roughly, yeah.

JC: And then after you went travelling and stuff, did you always know that you wanted to move back to Scotland as opposed to Northern Ireland, or, or anywhere else for that matter?

CK: Probably, no, New Zealand was where I, I wanted to move to **[01:21:16]** New Zealand after, so came home for, like, a wedding I needed to go to and then I think life just kind of swept, swept us up a bit and, and New Zealand never really happened, and I still don't know why that fully didn't happen, but, but no, moving back to Northern Ireland wasn't considered and hadn't, during university, maybe the first few years I went home for summers because you had to cos you didn't have enough money to pay your rent in the summer.

JC: Yeah.

CK: And I knew that I was becoming less, more, I mean, it's a difficult transition moving home for a few months, because you don't, all your friends are in Glasgow, you don't have the same friends at, in, in Northern Ireland, so you don't see your friends, but you're living in a bedroom in your mum's house again, you don't have any finances, you don't have a job, you're there for a few months and yes, it's nice to catch up with your family, but you don't have the same freedoms, so very quickly after doing that for a few summers, you really don't want to do that anymore, so, so there's nothing for me to an extent in, in Northern Ireland, or at least there w-, there is now from a kind of family point of view, but moving from Australia to, back to Northern Ireland would never have been a consideration because there would have been nothing for me, my friends and my social groups and, and things weren't in, like, I wanted to go and catch up with all my friends in Glasgow.

JC: Did you stay living in the university area or did you move further out?

CK: It is kind of still, do you know Glasgow at all?

JC: Yeah, well, I was, I was meant to be living there for this project, but since we switched to remote only, I moved back to Belfast, but I do, I do, my dad's from Glasgow, so I know it quite well.

CK: Oh well, like, well, I, we live in the West End, so it is the university area, but I went to Strathclyde and Cally, well, Cally first, Caledonian for my undergrad and then Strathclyde for my postgrad, so I didn't actually go to university in the West End, even though it is the, you know, it's kind of away, where I went, and now it's where we live and it's, you know, where you go for dinner, drinks or whatever, so yeah, I suppose I did stay quite inner city.

JC: Yeah, so you're still based there now, yeah?

CK: Yeah, still based there now, and there is always a consideration you could probably get more bang for your buck a wee bit further out, but part of me's like, well, I, I'm in Glasgow for this lifestyle, I want to be able to walk round the corner and get a, a coffee and–

JC: It's always that trade-off between location and, and what you pay as well.

CK: Yeah, yes, yeah.

JC: I know the same living in, in south Belfast as well, it's kind of a similar trade-off, and then you said you've, your daughter's four, is that right?

CK: Yeah, she'll be five soon, so she starts school next year.

JC: Right.

CK: Yeah.

JC: And she, you presumably brought, well, yeah, you said you've brought her back to Northern Ireland quite a lot. I'm, I'm wondering, you know, what she thinks of it and it's presumably just mainly like, a visiting, visiting family thing, and a holiday?

CK: Yeah, visiting family and a holiday, her memories, I mean, there are some differences, like, for example, like, this is mad, last time I was over she had two McDonald's within a space of five days and I'm like, oh my God, your dad's going to freak. He was back, he was over, he was working still, so he never came over that time, but she was with my, like, they all just, their dietary habits are different and, you know, like, they just say oh get the wee ones a McDonald's, and that's what happens really quickly, but I'm like, I would never, and I know that sound, like, I'm not trying sound anything, or I would never even say to them cos why would I insult their daily decisions in that way, but that is the truth of the matter, so my daughter Ruth will just love it, right, cos she's given free rein with the biscuit tin and they jump in the car and they drive two minutes down the road to McDonald's, you know, and they've already had their dinner, they've had soup for dinner, but this is like some kind of supper cos the kids are all playing together and, so she'll just, I think, I know she loves it cos of, just of her conversations, but that's the kind of thing she'll think, she'll be like, wow, this is just great, you get to do what you want when you're here and eat what you want, like, that kind of *Home Alone* thing, or that, like–

JC: Yeah [laughs], I know what you mean.

CK: And she doesn't see any side of, like, you know, she doesn't see any of the parades, she literally just, she's in houses with all these wee girls that just play, they have loads of toys and they're all together in a way that she'll never, she'll never have that, like, she, my, my partner's, her dad's mum and dad are from Glasgow, she sees them all the time and she does have cousins, but because my family are walking distance from each other, they're really in each other's houses all the time, you know, like, you know, in Northern Ireland, they're not like that here, when we, when we go we go on a Saturday and a Sunday and, you know, you don't just turn up at people's houses, and I describe that to them, I'm like, you

would never have phoned ahead going to my aunts', they still don't, they just bounce in and out and you don't know when you turn up what child's going to be there.

JC: Yeah.

CK: It's, it's all the children run about, so that'll be my daughter's memory I imagine, just seeing houses full of these kids, like, what, this is unbelievable, and there's no real, well, when she goes it's holiday time, so there's no real bedtime routine, so she just thinks it's absolutely great.

JC: Yeah, and I suppo-, but I suppose the flipside of that, as you were saying earlier, would be that if you lived there then she would be exposed to some of the more problematic things that still happen in Northern Ireland.

CK: Absolutely, yeah, and I, and I wouldn't want that, so as much as I'm like, oh wow, that's, it's great for a holiday point of view, like, I don't want her exposed to that, kind of purposely keep her away from it.

JC: Would it be important for you, for her to grow, and your chil-, children generally to grow up with a sense of themselves as having an Irish heritage, or, or is that not particularly important?

CK: It is, it is and she always says, and this is through our conversations, I'm half-Irish and half-Scottish, cos I've told her she's half, but I've got that, like, she's got a double-barrelled surname, like, I didn't want to lose the King, my, my surname's King, so she's King-Robson, so, like, I think it, maybe it's even more important because I'm further away that she does know that that, like, that side of her life as well as, you know, her, her Scottish heritage as well, so she's very clear on that, I'm half-, I'm half-Irish, half-Scottish, and then my dad and all those ones will say Northern Irish.

JC: Northern Irish, yeah.

CK: Yeah, but I like her saying half-Irish, half-Scottish cos that's what I feel that she is.

JC: Yeah, and would you, would you, like, encourage her to do any sort of traditional Irish or Northern Irish activities, like, I know obviously maybe slightly less on the Protestant side, but things like Irish dancing are quite popular in, in Glasgow as well?

CK: Yeah, yeah, although weirdly Irish dancing isn't, like, my, my aunt and granny were, like, award-winning Irish dancing-, dancers, so it, it is associated weirdly with North-, or with Catholic and Protestant, like, very much so, so, yeah, all my cousins wee girls do Irish dancing and I think it's, I would like for her to be as good as, as them cos they go, like, but my, but my aunt's a brilliant Irish dancer, like, she gets up at every wedding and does jigs and there was, like, a, a YouTube video that went viral and it was during lockdown, her Irish dancing up and down the street with her three girls, so she's really very good, and that's who teaches people in Ballymena, so all my wee cousins are, are, they're actually quite good, but it's quite pageanty, so I would love that for Ruth, I would love her to go at an Irish

dancing class, but there's a differentiation between, like, Irish dancing and then there's, like, an American kind of school of Irish dancing and it's quite pageanty here, so they wear wigs and makeup and I don't like that, so I'd love her to do the Irish dancing in Ireland, but she would be terrible in comparison to them, so she couldn't just jump into a class.

JC: Yeah, I see what you mean.

CK: Cos they've got it, they've got it in their, I don't know, you know, they do it more often, so they've, practice makes perfect doesn't it.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

CK: So, so yeah, that's definitely something I'd love to do, but it is so pageanty here that I'm just like, hmm, have you seen, do you know what I'm talking about, my saying the wigs and the makeup?

JC: I think, yeah, I think I have sort of seen bits and I'm not totally familiar with it, but I think I know what you mean, they're sort of more, like, American-style thing where they have, like, the beauty pageants and things, like, I know what you mean.

CK: Very much so, and fake tan and stuff, like, they're, they're really quite, it's a different look here, whereas it is a very plain look back in, in Ireland, so yeah, that kind of puts me off it a bit, but otherwise I would love her to do that, there's no other, like, St Patrick's Day, yeah, we maybe do a wee thing on St Patrick's Day, but not particularly, and St Patrick's Day's big now in Belfast, there's a big St Patrick's Day parade, but there wasn't much done on St Patrick's Day when we were younger, it was, it was mentioned in school and, you know, but it was, maybe it was, it was actually, like, Canada was the biggest St Patrick's Day I've ever had.

JC: Really, okay.

CK: Yeah, like, you know, it's massive in America, it's massive in Canada, it is getting a bit bigger in Belfast I would say, like, there is a big parade and stuff now that my dad goes to and, **[01:31:16]** and again St Patrick's Day, you know, is, like, people will tell you it's claimed by both sides, so it's not a religious, although it is clearly steeped in religion, but it's celebrated by both sides.

JC: And I think sort of similar to what we were talking about at the Twelfth it's, it's sort of become, so well, certainly for me, like, living around Queen's and stuff, it's very much become a sort of party thing for people to go out and drink in public and things like that.

CK: Drink as much Guinness–

JC: Yeah.

CK: Yeah, yeah, exactly, exactly.

JC: Okay, well, kind of final question that I would have had and it kind of, it's the culmination of, of all, a lot of what we've been talking about, but, was the, was how, how would you describe yourself in terms of your identity and your nationality? You sai-, you said your daughter would identify as half-Irish, but then your family would point out that technically it would be Northern Irish. Would you describe yourself as Irish or Northern Irish or British or Scottish?

CK: Irish.

JC: Irish.

CK: Irish, I tick it on all forms, and definitely don't, I wouldn't identify as British unless you need to on some forms, it's, like, British passport, you know, you need to be ticking that. I have actually got the Irish application for an Irish passport, would love an Irish passport, more just from a kind of Europe point of view because, you know, that was, like, I was like, well, they're still in the EU, so, so there's that as well, but it would be, but then again I'm like, well, why have two passports just to, well, no, not why, it's just, like, why spend a hundred pound on a passport when you're not going to use both, certainly the one time, you know, so, so yes, I would identify as Irish. I want an Irish passport, someday I'll send away the form and get one, when I'm, when I'm feeling I've got an extra hundred pound in the bank for no reason, but I do feel it's a reason, like, I want it, so I, yeah.

JC: Yeah, and do you think leaving Northern Ireland has sort of changed your outlook on anything or changed who you are as a person, or, or do you think it's maybe the opposite, that you left because of, because you'd kind of outgrown it in a way?

CK: I think I left because I outgrew, outgrew it. I think I was, I was really clear on that, weirdly at the age of seventeen when you're applying, I knew that and I think the rest was inevitable, like, upon moving away, although people do move back, don't they, and just quite quickly, you know, like, kind of stop where they, or restart where they stopped off when they eighteen, but, no, I think I moved cos I wa-, I wasn't agreeing, and I didn't know what I wasn't agreeing with as much then. I maybe know a bit stronger now, but there's a lot of things I remain tight-lipped on when I go home, cos it's not my place to go and start arguments with everybody, so when I am with, like, or even on group messages, it's always, like, even now in response to coronavirus, it's like, oh well, look what she's saying now, and it's always kind of, like, the leader of, like, the Sinn Féin that they're discussing, kind of, like, she can't, she can't do any right, kind of thing, I'm like, well, what, what is the coronavirus response. However, some of the responses have been a bit ridiculous, you know, but, so there's, I remain tight-lipped with some conversations with, with family, when I go home, and I don't want to be tight-lipped, I don't want to move somewhere that I have to sort of not give my views.

JC: Yeah, sure.

CK: It was through want of not getting into arguments.

JC: That's great. Is there anything else that you wanted to talk about, or that we haven't covered that you think's important? We've co-, we've covered quite a bit, so it's, it's been really great.

CK: Yeah, no, and I mean, how you'll ever put that into, like, I know it's just hard when you're gathering together research to kind of put it into a viewpoint, cos I've probably jumped from one opinion to the other, but I've just tried to be honest as possible.

JC: No, but that, yeah, no, that, that's really interesting. I'll end the recording there, now.

INTERVIEW ENDS