

G17: CLARE KING INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Clare King [pseudonym]
Interviewer: Dr Jack Crangle
Interview summarisers: Dr Hilary White and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded across two audio files that were spliced together to create a single audio file.

G17: Clare King	Start time: 00:00:00	Finish time: 01:35:31	Duration: 01:35:31	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Born in 1983 in Ballymena, Co. Antrim to nominally Protestant parents and lived there until leaving to attend university in Glasgow, aged eighteen. Comments on her awareness of sectarian divisions from an early age, whereas she did not recognise that she lived in a deprived area of the town until she was older. Her father worked in a tyre factory and her mother as a dinner lady and later in a local supermarket. Says that her parents shielded her from the fact that ‘money was tight’. Has fond memories of growing up in a close-knit extended family. Explains that she and her brother attended the local primary school and subsequently the grammar school, by virtue of having passed the eleven-plus. Reflects on the inequity of an education system in which one’s ‘life opportunities’ are ‘predetermined when you’re eleven’.			
10:00–19:59	Became aware of the class divide between other families and hers at grammar school, where she felt somewhat out of place, being the only person from her estate to go there. Describes her leisure activities when young, which included swimming and summer activities at the local community centre. She attended Bible groups, even though hers wasn’t a religious family, apart from her Baptist aunt, who accompanied Clare to Sunday school. Reveals that she has been an atheist from a young age, and confesses that she once lied to her aunt about believing in God during one of their walks to Sunday school.			
20:00–31:16	States that Ballymena was a mainly Protestant town and that she grew up knowing few Catholics. Discusses how, despite coming from a non-religious family, she would be identified as Protestant by others in NI. Says that her parents were not bigoted, nor were they very forthcoming about their political views. Discusses the tensions she felt in relation to Twelfth of July celebrations. Although she lived on an estate where ‘everybody’s family went on [...] the Orange walks’, she felt embarrassed to admit this to her more affluent grammar school friends. So while she did take part in the festivities, she ‘just didn’t mention it in the grammar school’, and as an adult would avoid making visits home during July. The two interview audio files were spliced together here.			
31:17–41:16	Recalls questioning the meaning behind Orange culture more and more as a teenager, and now thinks the annual Twelfth celebrations have become rather tawdry and alcohol focused, although she admits that she has no first-hand knowledge of them any more. Returning to her school years, she says she found the transition from primary to grammar school difficult at first and was conscious that she was changing her ‘social status [...] to a different level of affluence’. Moving to university was less problematic and she found it reasonably easy to fit in socially, unlike her brother, who struggled.			
41:17–51:16	Explains that she always had the ambition to go to university and that her main aim in doing so was to escape the social conservatism and sectarian mindsets of NI and become an independent adult. Adds that she had also started to hear			

	<p>about 'more progressive politics' elsewhere, including frank discussion of topics such as abortion, which 'you still can't have openly' in NI. Thinks that leaving broke her parents' hearts, but that her father now 'couldn't be happier' for her and loves visiting her in Glasgow. Briefly outlines her brother's university choices at QUB. Explains that she did a degree in business economics and later returned to complete a masters degree in social work.</p>
51:17-01:01:16	<p>Describes choosing Scotland for university because it was 'close enough, but far away enough' from NI. Says that she enjoyed her time there and went to Canada for an exchange year. Found Glasgow to be similar to home in terms of its people, but very different in its cultural vitality. Says she met with no sectarian prejudice, though knew of its existence in the city, and has never seen an Orange parade there, nor does she know 'anybody that wears a Rangers or Celtic top'. Firmly believes that Glasgow and Scotland more generally are much more progressive and culturally diverse places than the ones she grew up in.</p>
01:01:17-01:11:16	<p>Explains that in her early days in Glasgow she tended to make 'a lot of excuses' for her family, but now accepts that 'people are who they are'. Discusses how her social and political outlook diverges quite starkly from that of her family in NI, in that she considers herself a socialist who supports both Scottish independence and Irish reunification. Reveals that her father has belatedly come out as gay and now lives with his civil partner in Belfast because it is 'a bit more accepting' than Ballymena. Says that she enjoys discussing politics with him, even though he remains a staunch unionist.</p>
01:11:17-01:21:16	<p>States that she visits NI more often since her daughter was born and enjoys doing so, although there is still a 'backward kind of way people think' that alienates her. Explains that she uses the term home interchangeably about Glasgow and Ballymena, despite her not wishing to live in NI or raise children there. Thinks Belfast has changed dramatically in recent years and is now 'quite cosmopolitan', but feels that many mindsets are still 'stagnant', NI politics 'is often at a standstill' and 'crazy right-wing statements' are not uncommon. Returning to her life chronology, she reveals that after her undergraduate degree studies she briefly worked for the NHS, lived in Australia for a year and travelled around Asia for six months before returning to Glasgow.</p>
01:21:17-01:31:16	<p>Explains that she had plans to move to New Zealand, but these never came to fruition. Instead, she returned to study in Glasgow and is now settled in the West End area of the city. Describes how much her daughter enjoys spending time with her relatives and cousins in NI. Says that her daughter is 'very clear' on her Irish heritage and sees herself as 'half-Irish and half-Scottish'. Clare says that she would love her daughter to take up Irish dancing and reveals that her aunt and grandmother were award-winning Irish dancers.</p>
01:31:17-01:35:51	<p>Clare herself identifies as Irish and would only identify as British if required to do so for official or legal purposes, although she hasn't yet applied for an Irish passport, mainly for reasons of cost. Reflects that she left NI because she 'outgrew it' and felt uncomfortable with many aspects of social and political life there. Ends by saying that she still remains 'tight-lipped' on certain issues when she visits her family in NI, because she doesn't see it as her place 'to go and start arguments with everybody'.</p>