

## M14-SG2: MEGHAN CHARD INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Meghan Chard
Interviewer: Dr Barry Hazley
Interview summariser: Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded as a single audio file with no section breaks

M14-SG2: Meghan Chard	Start time: 00:00	Finish time: 01:11:39	Duration: 01:11:39	Brief summary of content:
00:00–09:59	<p>Begins by explaining that, as someone who was born in NI and who has ‘grown up between Manchester and Ireland’, she feels strongly drawn to this oral history project. Speaks of being ‘very, very torn in who I am’ and ‘very torn in what my, what my nationality is’. Says she is burdened by ‘a constant sort of tension because I’m never fully Irish and I’m never fully English, I’m neither really’, which leads her to self-identify as ‘Irish Mancunian’. Describes her family’s migration between NI, the Bahamas and Manchester during her upbringing. States that she first became aware of her identity tensions during her secondary schooling in NI, where she lived for four years, before returning to Manchester when she was fifteen. States that ‘even though I’m kind of, I’m living in England and I’ve now got an English accent, I feel like I’m not just British, I am Irish, you know, that’s where kind of the conflict lies really’.</p>			
10:00–19:59	<p>Reveals that her Catholic parents have always been forthcoming about being ‘second-class citizens’ in NI when they lived there, and about their experiences of the Troubles, which ‘were quite traumatic times for them’. Explains that her father’s family was burned out of the Protestant area of Belfast they lived in when the Troubles began, and that he, like her mother, applied for teaching training in Manchester, which was where they met. States that she enjoyed her primary education in England, but not her secondary schooling in Donaghmore, Co. Tyrone, after which she sat her A-levels in Bury in Greater Manchester and then attended university at King’s College in London.</p>			
20:00–29:59	<p>Discusses growing up in a predominantly Irish Catholic milieu in Prestwich. Says that she visited NI annually up until her early twenties and still feels ‘an instant connection’ on meeting someone from NI. Explains that she remained interested in NI current affairs while at university, but did not involve herself in Irish social or political activities in London. Explains that she was taught a good deal of Irish history at school in Tyrone and that she shares her mother’s nationalist interpretation of the Irish past, adding that she herself can sometimes become ‘a bit sort of ignited and a bit sort of, yeah, real pro-Ireland and sort of, you know, against, against the British, definitely’.</p>			
30:00–39:59	<p>States that while she still feels strongly ‘aligned with being Irish’, the longer she lives in England, the more British she feels. Yet she also affirms the abiding impact of the Troubles on her sense of identity, comparing the conflict to ‘a badge of honour’ and explaining that her pride in her Irishness is enhanced by the resilience Irish people have shown during the long war. Discusses how living in Surrey has affected her voting preferences. Mentions her sadness at losing her maiden name when she married her husband, saying: ‘my surname was a real part of my identity. It sort of straight away showed people that I was Irish, whereas [...] I’m just like an average English person now’. Recalls her attempts to inform and educate her English in-laws about NI and the Troubles.</p>			

40:00–49:59	Remembers hearing the IRA bomb explosion in Manchester in June 1996 and her reaction to it: ‘I was only a child, but in my head from what I’d heard I kind of thought the IRA were meant to be good, and then they bombed Manchester, so yeah, it was a bit kind of confusing’. Also mentions the 1998 Omagh bomb, but cannot recall experiencing any hostility in England as a result of these atrocities. Says that she did not discuss these events with her schoolfriends, but did have heated debates about her nationality with a Tory friend. Mentions her work as a dentist and her being the niece of the former President of Ireland, Mary McAleese. Recalls her gradual loss of religious faith while at university and states that the Catholicism of her childhood has ‘definitely become less important’ to her in adulthood.
50:00–59:59	Reveals that she and her husband had their daughter christened, despite their lack of religious belief. Says that doing so was ‘culturally important’ to her, yet she goes on to betray a lingering perplexity: ‘Isn’t that silly that I’m like, even though I’m not even religious, I’d rather get her christened Catholic?’ Reflects on her loss of connection to Manchester since her parents separated and sold the family home there. Extols the many benefits of living near London and says that she has no wish to live in Ireland. Recalls the importance of the peace process to her parents and their pleasure and relief when the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998.
01:00:00–01:09:59	Discusses how a new north-south divide in her family, with some members living in Manchester and others in the south-east of England, has replaced a previous divide: ‘it was always sort of Northern Ireland versus England sort of thing, and now it’s almost Manchester versus the south of England’. Says her siblings share her acute identity tensions and dilemmas, and that they too view the impact of the Troubles in transgenerational terms: ‘I think the impact it had on my parents translates to their kids [...]. I think that passes on through generations’. She thinks that her parents believe that she and her siblings ‘feel English, which I think saddens them’. Confesses that she still struggles to define herself, but settles on ‘Irish Mancunian’, adding: ‘I couldn’t just say British and I couldn’t just say Irish’.
01:10:00–01:11:39	She admits that the term Northern Irish still has significance for her and that she feels her identity is ‘Northern Irish, more than just Ireland’, explaining that it is ‘the hardship that Northern Ireland went through during the Troubles’ that makes this designation meaningful and distinctive for her.