


Project: 'Queer Lives: An oral history...' Respondent: Ames Year of Birth: 1995 Age: Connection to project: Local Knowledge Date of Interview: 18/12/2024 Interviewer: Rachel Kelly Recording Agreement: Yes Information & Consent: Yes Photographic Images: No (Number of:) Length of Interview: 56.05 Location of Interview: Respondent's home Edinburgh Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)		Glasgow's Southside+ Stories 
Time (from: mins/secs)	Description	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
00.29	<i>Where were you born? Where were you brought up?</i>	
	"Dublin, Ireland."	00.33
00.34	<i>Where do you live now?</i>	
	"Edinburgh."	00.38
00.39-00.48	<i>We've used the term queer in an attempt to be as inclusive as possible but appreciate that not everybody would use this term to describe themselves or an aspect of themselves. Is there a term you would prefer me to use during the course of this interview?</i>	
	"No queer is good, yes."	00.53
00.56	<i>Do you have any pronouns that you use?</i>	
	"They and them."	00.58
01.03	<i>Would you mind telling me if you've come out as queer and if so, when was this?</i>	
	"I think I probably came out as queer around 20 and then I came out as trans about two years ago, when I was 27/28 and it was kind of a staged process, first some friends and then work and family."	01.09-01.31
01.41	<i>What were your friends reaction to you coming out as queer?</i>	
	"No-one was surprised. A lot of my friends said they knew that already. I think I probably came out as bi-sexual and then the lesbian later. People were really supportive, enthusiastic I would say, which was really nice."	01.50-02.19
02.20	<i>What were your family's reactions?</i>	
	"I'm not sure I came out in such a clear way to them, I just said I was going to Pride with some friends and I sort of thought they'd get the message and then a couple of years later I was like, this is my girlfriend. They were like, oh okay. So, they were fine, my Mum was like quite enthusiastic and Christmases she'll get me something rainbow-themed as a sort of a little nod, which is really sweet. My Dad is okay but he's not really one for talking about things as an Irish man of that generation."	02.21-02.50
02.51	<i>How about when you came out as trans with friends?</i>	
	"Friends were also really supportive. It felt like a different experience, it felt definitely more vulnerable and my very close friends were supportive. Again, it was sort of a process. My friend runs Queer Hiking and that's where I met all of my queer pals really in Edinburgh and when you go on a queer hike you have a	02.59-04.15

	little name badge and you put your pronouns, and I gradually shifted from she/her to she/they to they/she to they/them and it felt like quite an organic process I guess, so that didn't really feel like a coming out as such but I came out again when I thought I want to get surgery. My close friends were very supportive, some other friends didn't get it as much or thought it was extreme or were surprised, but I think people have mostly come around."	
04.18	<i>Can you tell me when you realised you were trans?</i>	
	"I think I probably started thinking about it maybe five years ago and after maybe one or two years I thought this feels right, it feels fluid."	04.19-04.46
04.48	<i>When you were younger, what was your experience growing up as a queer person?</i>	
	"I wasn't out when I was younger, I probably started thinking about it when I was 16/17. It wasn't something that was on my mind at that point. I think I always felt a bit different; I didn't gel super well with my peers and I think some of that was maybe my queerness and some of it was maybe other factors. I went to quite a small school in South Dublin which was middle-class, much richer than I was, that sort of thing, rather than queerness."	05.00-05.55
06.00	<i>Did you go to college or university?</i>	
	"Yes, I went to university at Edinburgh that's why I moved over here."	06.01
06.12	<i>Did you find it supportive, or was it a factor?</i>	
	"The university itself didn't feel either supportive or unsupportive really. It felt kind of a nameless, faceless institution. There were groups and things like. I remember really wanting to go to the L.G.B.T. group at uni when I was still questioning back then and I had a best friend at the time who later turned out was lesbian, I was also lesbian and there was this intense friendship but neither of us was out. There was one gay male friend that I had who was super-camp and comfortably gay but other than that I didn't really know many queer people and I studied science so I think that was probably a factor, so I'd say people weren't kind of out with their expression at that point and I think that's funny now because that was 7 years ago and people that were my cohorts are coming out now as queer and trans. I think at the time we didn't have the language for that."	06.15-07.50
07.51-08.00	<i>Is there anything you'd like to see changed in terms of educational institutions support or otherwise for queer people?</i>	
	"Definitely, I think particularly in schools. I don't know what it's like now but when I was at school there wasn't any conversation around queer people, there wasn't representation, there was no queer inclusive sex-ed, even anything about healthy relationships or consensual relationships or queer societies or anything like that. That might be different now, but it would be really great to see."	08.03-09.32
09.51-09.57	<i>How do you think this could be achieved? Government Policy, Media, Social Media, Society attitudes?</i>	
	"I think a combination of society attitude shifting is a big one and I think it definitely feels like they're shifting. I think in terms of school curriculums Government policy is a really big part of that and incorporating queer histories and sex-ed and mental health. All of these types of things feel like they kind of need to come from the state mandate down."	09.59-10.45
11.00	<i>What do you feel needs to be incorporated regarding trans in education?</i>	
	"I feel similar, but this can be really tricky because the media in the last around trans issues is horrific so I think humanising and de-stigmatising, sharing stories as well and on a human-to-human level people connect much more and having much more gender-neutral language, uniforms and sports not being so binary as well."	11.01-12.27
12.34	<i>Would you say you'd faced any barriers in the workplace or your career due to being queer?</i>	
	"I don't think I've faced any barriers. The job I've been doing for several years is in conservation so mostly based here in Scotland but we work with a lot of	12.54-15.14

	international partners and I've spent a fair bit of time in Kenya, Tanzania and Brazil for work and my experience being queer in Kenya is very, very different to here and I think there isn't really any support for that. I have a lot of international colleagues. In Scotland I feel very comfortable being out as queer and I think everyone in my office knows I'm queer, knows I'm trans, everyone uses the right pronouns but that feels very different on an international level. I had a three-month work placement in Kenya and I thought this is great I want to live here but by the end it was constant homophobia all the time in this normalised way, it was relentless. For me that does feel like a barrier. I also hung out with trans people in Kenya and particularly in Nairobi where there was a more queer underground scene."	
16.09	<i>How do you think companies, particularly international companies can help with this?</i>	
	"I think having some sort of awareness of it, or policy around it, or emotional or moral support about it. I didn't feel comfortable going to my managers who are straight and saying this feels uncomfortable, having an open conversation about it would've made me feel more comfortable."	16.17-16.58
17.04	<i>Would you say the experience of being queer has changed over time in terms of acceptance or otherwise?</i>	
	"Yes, I think so, it feels less traumatic. I feel lucky that things are more acceptable now than 40, 50, 100 years ago and maybe that's part of being a bit older and not in educational institutions anymore, but yes it feels more accepted now than when I was at school and university."	17.14-17.47
17.55	<i>What are your thoughts on the current public hoo-ha, shall we say, on gender identity?</i>	
	"I think it's pretty bleak, it's really depressing, it just makes me really sad and it has a really vitriol and real impact on people's lives. I volunteer with L.G.B.T. with young people, everyone's under age 25, and recently because of all the debates around trans, suddenly it's like all of these people can't get access to gender care because gender care has paused in Scotland for under 25-year-olds and it's just horrific. It's leaving people who have known about their gender identity since they were 15, 16, 17 and to be waiting year on year to start living your life, to have that discomfort in your body it's just really horrific. I haven't really kept up to date as much because I find it draining and depressing but one thing I really noticed was that when I came out as trans to my parents, they were using the language of the media. So, it's really harmful these opinion pieces and it's really harmful to actual real lives. The other thing I've noticed is it drives a wedge between me as a trans person and society and it's sad because I really like meeting new people."	18.02-23.16
23.22	<i>Why do you think it's being used in politics and the media?</i>	
	"I think it's seen as a new trendy fad. It falls into this larger move to the Right, like a scapegoating of people. I think there's a capitalist element to it where this isn't a need to have this type of thing for people to have. I did my dissertation on access to gender healthcare in Africa where people would be waiting 18 or 19 years to get an appointment at a gender clinic. It's this erasure of queer and trans history."	23.47-25.06
25.18	<i>Can you see any parallels to things from the past, like Section 28?</i>	
	"One hundred per cent, yes. It really does feel like Section 28, but re-applied for trans people now, definitely, and I feel like it's a lot of the same arguments, the morality of it, the fear of corrupting children, it's all the same language that was used around queerness and the Aids crisis of years ago."	25.20-25.55
25.56-26.07	<i>Do you believe that there is such a thing as an L.G.B.T.+ community which implies a coherent group identity based solely on a shared sexual orientation or gender identity?</i>	

	<p>"I think there are L.G.B.T. communities for sure. I obviously don't believe that L.G.B.T. folks are a homogeneous group. I definitely don't think we are one cohesive group but I do think there's something there about there's a real sense of shared kind of identity defined which with other L.G.B.T. folk which does cut across other areas of difference like across age for example or if you had a different identity within the L.G.B.T. umbrella, I think there is still a kind of sense of shared sibling-hood. Obviously, we're not one big homogeneous community but that said I have found more community within the queer community than I have felt in my life, by a long way."</p>	26.10-28.21
28.25	<i>Do you think there's enough dialogue between the generations of queer people or not?</i>	
	<p>"No, definitely not. I find it hard to meet people of different generations. So yeah, I would really like there to be more, particularly with my friends, we'd really like a queer elder mentor, but I don't really know how to find them. I remember my first girlfriend about six or seven years ago, her parents were also lesbians and it as through them that I met a whole new generation, it was like the Newcastle lesbian scene. I remember being like, oh my God, this is amazing. It was the first time I'd met queer people who had kids and queer people who had lived through section 28, it was like a beautiful community. It's just hard to know where to go I guess."</p>	28.30-29.33
29.36	<i>Do you feel that your experiences are similar to those of other queer people?</i>	
	<p>"Some people definitely yes and some aspects no, but I think with a lot of queer people we can kind of find something in common. For example, my family were really quite chilled about me being queer, they were less chilled about me being trans and I think that was the first time I'd experienced that. I think it's kind of fine now but there was a time when I thought oh is this going to be a real division or am I going to have to distance myself from these people, and that experience felt pretty connecting with other queer people. I think we all get to some degree homophobia or trans-phobia, or discomfort, or that experience of having to come out over and over again. I think that is something within my life that is universal only the degrees are very varying. Something that isn't so universal is the political side of it. I think that where being queer allows you a lot of freedoms and freedoms from life stages like getting married, having kids. It allows a lot of different ways of thinking and being, I think people tend to be more community focused. That doesn't feel universal but it does feel like an option for a lot of queer people which I think is really nice."</p>	29.42-31.36
33.05	<i>Do you have any thoughts about the provision of elder care for queer people?</i>	
	<p>"Yes, for sure. I think with fewer children it is a worry and for people who are less connected to their biological families and who don't have access to those kind of networks of kinship which a lot of people don't have, but which is exacerbated for queer people. I think even if you were in a private institution for that one queer person there, that would be so uncomfortable, you'd be so cut off from your community, have the potential to be misunderstood, particularly for trans people whose bodies are different getting care from a health professional would be super-uncomfortable. I wouldn't necessarily feel safe if it wasn't specifically for trans-people."</p>	33.12-34.20
34.30	<i>Would it appeal to you to go into a queer only care home if you had to?</i>	
	<p>"Oh yes, definitely, 100% yes. I think for that sense of kinship and community and comfort, I'd love that."</p>	34.31-34.37
34.39	<i>How are you socialising?</i>	
	<p>"In my early 20s I didn't socialise as much with queer people. I used to work in the student union bar and through that it just so happened that there was a bunch of queer people in that space so that was the first time I had really any queer friends. It wasn't until just the aftermath of Covid and I had also gone</p>	35.02-36.16

	through a break up so I was wanting to meet new people and it was mainly through the hiking group in Edinburgh and a swimming group that was a sub group of the hiking group and we all became friends and started going to festivals and nights out to the pub, so it just really blossomed from that."	
37.22	<i>Do you think people lost friends or lost touch with friends through Covid?</i>	
	"Definitely yeah. I'm sure it varied individually but I remember really clearly that when you could only hang out with four people in a group and you had to pick which friends. I think those looser connections just really fell away and I thought I'll stay really connected to those people that I can live with or people that you were close enough to have phone calls with or happen to just bumped into at things and I think for me at least, after Covid was a really key way of forming communities because all the queer people were at the queer events."	37.32-38.44
39.00	<i>Have you experienced any barriers to healthcare due to being queer?</i>	
	"I have not to be honest I have been really fortunate. Again I did my dissertation on healthcare for queer people in Africa and there were so many barriers coming up there about people not feeling comfortable enough to go for healthcare, people not being out and lack of healthcare advice for people that were queer, people not wanting to not go to a healthcare provider near them because someone might recognise them and they might not feel comfortable seeking advice. I feel so lucky that has hasn't happened to me here or in Ireland."	39.06-40.07
40.14	<i>Do you think there is enough healthcare services for queer people?</i>	
	"I don't really know of any specific ones for queer people. L.G.B.T. health and well-being are running a trans and non-binary sexual health screening that kind of thing but that always feels very kind of ad-hoc. I think it would be beneficial to have specific healthcare services but it's not something that I'm aware of that exists."	40.21-40.43
40.49	<i>How would you like to see things going forward in terms of healthcare for queer people?</i>	
	"So much of it is tied to the NHS and the NHS being functioning and not privatised because none of us can access good healthcare at the moment, you might be left waiting for ages regardless of what your health concerns are. So yes, I would like to see a properly funded universal healthcare service in this country, and particularly around gender affirming healthcare and healthcare for folks who are wanting to transition. It's an abomination at the moment. I eventually went private to get access to healthcare. I was on the waiting list for the NHS gender clinic in Edinburgh and it was like two and a half years before I finally got a call for a first screening. That is pretty typical. I've got a friend who is waiting on testosterone and it's so difficult for them to get access to it. You have to go to your G.P., pick it up and the prescription takes a long time to come in and you have to go through these psychological evaluations to prove your gender dysphoria which involves sitting down in a hospital room and explaining your experiences to somebody who again probably isn't queer or trans and it feels uncomfortable, a bit de-humanising. You have to tell them everything they want and you're very focused on your own pain and discomfort and that's not the story anyone wants to be telling about themselves. Good mental healthcare is important for everybody, but particularly for queer people who need access to better mental health, therapy, access to gender affirming therapy, and all of that and I think there is a heightened need for that kind of support."	40.52-43.39
43.43	<i>Can you think of any legislation that has brought more rights for queer people?</i>	
	"The Equalities Act in Scotland and the U.K. and legalising equal marriage too. I lived in Ireland at the time of legalising marriage for queer people. I was living over here when they legalised abortion in Ireland."	43.52-44.56
45.26	<i>How did this make you feel when equal marriage rights came in Ireland?</i>	

	<p>"It was so exciting. At the time I was still questioning my sexuality so I didn't feel like I really owned that decision. I think the most exciting thing was that Ireland was supposedly a country that was run by the Catholic Church in a big way and it was like two thirds of people who voted YES, and it was a really high voter turnout and it was amazing to see that public opinion was pro-gay marriage and that brought a huge sense of safety and a sense of celebration."</p>	45.29-46.21
46.23	<i>What about the Abortion Act?</i>	
	<p>"Definitely the same. I think it was like a similar experience in terms of the Catholic Church has loosened and for that one I flew home to vote which was really nice because in Ireland you can't vote in a referendum... You can't do a postal vote, so you were getting people flying home from Australia to vote in this referendum and it was extraordinary to see. It was just great to see everyone thinking no this is so important we really want to do it. That was amazing and it was a really good conversation starter as well."</p>	46.24-47.23
47.46	<i>In your opinion what are the barriers to equal opportunities for queer people in Scotland, the U.K. or Ireland?</i>	
	<p>"I feel like so much of it is changing, society's perceptions, stigma and I do feel like that is happening. Such a big one at the moment, like trans-phobia, really feels horrific and the lack of funding and the scapegoating, even in the last few months, all of these government decisions are coming down on trans people like access to puberty blockers and it's just really basic, if people don't have access to healthcare then it's your human rights not being accessible. So, I think that would probably be the biggest one for me, otherwise honestly, I feel that it's pretty decent in this country."</p>	48.20-49.39
49.48	<i>How do you feel about the gender reform bill with Westminster blocking that?</i>	
	<p>"Not good. I'm almost surprised that it's such a big thing for the government. I don't really understand why they're so anti trans healthcare and trans rights. I like to be honest, I don't engage with it that much, but yes, it's really bleak."</p>	49.51-50.22
50.27	<i>Do you think that the general public are supportive of equal rights for queer people?</i>	
	<p>"I would say yes. Based on my experience I would think so, yes."</p>	50.31
50.42	<i>What are your hopes for the future for queer rights legislation in Scotland?</i>	
	<p>"I would love to see more inclusion of queer and trans folk around co-habitation and having decent gender reform, those types of things."</p>	50.43-51.19
51.28	<i>Can you give any examples of any positive portrayals of queer people in the arts/media?</i>	
	<p>"My bookshelf is mostly queer literature which is really great. One of the first art productions I saw was Tipping the Velvet by Sarah Waters, I remember seeing it when I was about 19/20 and it totally blew my mind that you could have queerness represented in arts. I'm a big comedy fan as well and there's a lot of really fantastic queer comedy in the U.K. like Catherine Bohart, there is like a cohort of them. In Edinburgh there's an open-mic night where once a month it's Mango so there's like an all-female trans and non-binary artists. They perform queer comedy there as well which we love."</p>	51.36-53.12
54.20	<i>How about on social media?</i>	
	<p>"There's a lot of queer therapy content on social media; there's things like The Expansive Group and I don't follow loads on Twitter or stuff like that. There are just so many public figures that are kind of open about queerness and particularly the younger ones, like stars and there's a lot of openly queer folks. It's almost taken as a given, which is nice."</p>	54.30-55.12
55.16	<i>That is all my questions, is there anything I've missed or you'd like to add?</i>	
	<p>"I think queerness and being trans has been the biggest thing in my life and has given me access to community and ways of connecting to people. I feel like it's</p>	55.17-56.00

	given me so much freedom to think about the world in different ways and opened up other ways of thinking as well. I feel very lucky to be queer and I think in any conversation about barriers, things are really positive and it's a positive experience as well."	
56.07	<i>Thank you very much for sharing your memories with me.</i>	
   		