This shows Hannah Scaife’s use of Thematic Analysis to code the excerpt from interview one (TA Excerpt 1) undertaken for her Master’s degree in Psychology (Scaife, 2016). This material is linked to an exercise to allow you to explore the application of Thematic Analysis which can be found in Chapter 11 of the book by Opie and Brown (2019).

Note: where (.) is used this indicates a very short pause and (.*n*) indicates a pause of approximately *n* seconds.

Participant W45YH

I: OK. In that case let’s get started. So, erm, with a focus on your own internal sense of self

W45YH: Mmhmm

I: can you describe to me the process by which you feel you’ve built an understanding of your own gender and sexual identities?

W45YH: That’s a big question.

I: (laugh)

W45YH: Ermm, it has been a long process. Obviously from – am I allowed to say how old I am?

I: yep

W45YH: from a child to age 26 and a half, quite a few years there and lots of different things have come into play, that have affected how I feel. So, the feeling, so, being young, I guess you could class me as a tomboy, then, wanted to wear boys’ clothes, play football, do all the boys’ stuff, it was that feeling of(.4), ‘am I a boy’? Erm, oh, wait, no I’m a lesbian, I don’t act like the people that I like, not like the people around me

I: what do you mean by the people that you like?

W45YH: so the people that I fancied, and had relationships with. I was very different to them.

I: Mmhm

W45YH: They were very feminine, I was quite the opposite. And I think there was this whole (.4) you know an (.4) it was like you had to label yourself, you know, categorise it all and I think I felt a pressure to (.3) erm, (.3) to work it out and be it, erm and at one point thinking that I was transsexual because I like the boys’ clothes, I do the boys’ things, I must be a boy.

I: When would you say that you felt like that?

W45YH: I was (.10) sss, fifteen? Seventeen? Fifteen seventeen::: erm.

I: and you don’t feel like that now?

W45YH: It’s it’s, no, it’s different now, it’s (.2), then it was, it felt like the options were you were a girl or you were a boy, you were straight, you were gay. That was it.

I: Mmhm

W45YH: Whereas now it’s brilliant, all these different terms are coming out. Pansexual, non binary, so it’s much more open, it’s not as rigid. So now after talking about it with friends, having bad reactions from family, erm, I’m kind of trying to work it out and speaking to a counsellor about it as well. It’s weird, self if the big thing about yourself; it’s the thing I didn’t want to admit or think about too much..

I: Mmhm

W45YH: ..go through phases of trying to work it out and then block it out. Erm..

I: Why, why do you think you wanted to block it out?

W45YH: Because it, it wasn’t the easy, it wasn’t the ‘I’m born a girl I feel like a girl I’m part of the majority I’m heterosexual’, it was the unknown, it was the minority. How many, how many people did I grow up with that were non binary? Well, there might have been a few but no one called it that..

I: Mmhm

W45YH: ..you were just, well, gay. Erm, yeah and there’s certain terms that I like, certain terms I don’t like. …..know that as well. Like I don’t like it when people say lesbian.

I: Why’s that?

W45YH: I just think the word itself is just, I think the way it’s been used (.) I think gay is better. It’s, for me, that’s that I prefer. Which is interesting because when I was at university doing a dissertation on performing gender, erm I found out that erm, er women who, cis [gender] women who identified as homosexual fought for the word lesbian.

I: Hmmm

W45YH: In the 70s I think it was. They didn’t want to be associated with ‘gay’, wanted their own, there was this whole movement. And when I said how people I knew liked to just say gay rather than lesbian …… my supervisor was very shocked, it’s kind of, changed. Erm but, self is a, is a, it’s a difficult one because you’re too close to it to work it out I think sometimes. And there’s so many different things at play. Society can make you feel many different ways without you realising. And the pressures and having to box it all. I think it’s great now with all these different terms.

I: What do you think is the process by which you’ve come to embrace different terms rather than just those binary gender and sexuality terms that you described before? Do you think that’s something that’s changed in society, do you think it’s that your personal experiences have opened it up for you, have you been exposed to something else, do you think it’s something that’s happened internally within you?

W45YH: I guess there’s a few different processes. Like, when I was growing up, you know, you had the dial up internet, so (.) whereas now everyone’s got internet on their phone, we’ve all got Facebook, the number of like erm there’s someone on Facebook, is it Lizzy the Lesbian or Lizzy the Lez or something..

I: I know it, yep.

W45YH: Every day there are interesting articles, and (.) great, moving stories and inspirational about not just lesbians but you know the whole (.1) rainbow, LGBT(.)Q(.) etc. Erm, so, the fact that it’s more visible, you know, as a group. It’s all more visible so that’s great, and then hearing the word ‘pansexual’ a lot more, and non binary a lot more, so (.) that wasn’t around when I was younger. You know, so it’s diff, that’s different, and also I don’t live in my home town where I was born and raised, I live away from home, which I think is great because I live somewhere where I went to university where there was an LGBT society, erm I have many queer friends here, so(.2) it’s (.2) it’s different it’s (.) like my world has opened up, in that way, when it comes to (.2) working out yourself, when it’s not, you know, the norm. Usual. Erm (.2) and yeah as you grow up and you have different relationships, I’ve always had support, for the most part, supportive relationships. Erm where (.3) you’ve got the space to kind of think about who you are and explore and yeah.

I: Do you mean romantic relationships, or?

W45YH: Mostly romantic, yes, yeah.

I: So you think that’s had an influence on how you understand your own identity?

W45YH: Definitely. When you’re, when you’re with someone who is supportive no matter what you, who you identify as then you’ve got room to explore. When you’re in, you know, your home town living with your parents and things are, aren’t understood and are weird or seen as weird, then you’re restricted, whereas being away from that and (.3) in a much more gay society up here in [city], then yeah, you’ve got more room to explore it.

I: You mentioned that for your (.2) university qualification you did a project that involved learning about gender and sexual identity. Do you think that your education has had an impact on how you understand yourself?

W45YH: Definitely, but it also caused a lot of confusion. So, looking into how we perform gender (.2) erm, and (.4) about, erm, (.), lots of different aspects of performance and gender made me question my own gender. Made me question, like, why I behave the way I behave, dress the way I dress, was it for me or was it for relationships, so that was quite interesting. But the fact that I went to that uni and did, I wanted to do that project, it just opened up so much literature that I didn’t know was out there, and finding out about performers who, whose work centred around gender, yeah, it opened up a lot that I wouldn’t have, that I don’t think I would’ve been exposed to if I hadn’t gone to that uni and done that degree, worked with that supervisor, etc.

Opie, C. and Brown, D. (eds) (2019)*Getting Started in Your Educational Research: A Student’s Guide to Design, Data Production and Analysis.* London: Sage.

Scaife, H.Z. (2016). ‘A qualitative exploration of sexual and gender identity in non-heterosexual women, specifically focused on identity formation, fluidity and intersectionality’. MSc thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University.