This is an excerpt from one of the interviews undertaken by Hannah Scaife (2016) for her Master’s degree in Psychology. This excerpt, and that of five other interviews, are used to highlight her use of Thematic Analysis as a tool for the analysis of qualitative data. Further details on her use of Thematic Analysis, and an exercise to allow you to explore its application, is given 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.

**Excerpt of interview transcript: WZC8Y**

I: So, with a focus on your internal sense of self, can you describe the process by which you think you built an understanding of your own gender and sexual identities?

WZC8Y: I think, I’ve always been aware that I’m a girl , and I’m probably quite stereotypically girly , and probably comes from the fact that I’ve always been put in dresses and played with dolls. But I’ve never thought against, rebelling against that, I’ve always been happy doing that. And I had, you know, stereotypical toys as a child, but then used to quite happily play with schools and Barbies and I was always mummy to something , I had a doll as a kid that [laugh] I think I was 7, and used to like treat her like a child and if I went to school and hadn’t put her in clean, my, leave her with my mum, and if my mum hadn’t put her in a clean dress when I got home from school I’d tell my mum off for [laugh] not looking after this doll, and she had like a car seat and a pram and literally went everywhere

I: [laugh] you committed!

WZC8Y: Yeah I was proper, I was like a proper 7 year old mum, I really was. Erm and then I think I’ve always been within those groups at school and just kind of like typically girly, I’ve never questioned that, I’ve never felt I should be anything different. Erm, and I think yeah always been happy in my body and who I am and my mind seems to fit with what I look like in a mirror, and things like that [laugh].

I: Good. And your sexual identity? What about the process of understanding that?

WZC8Y: That’s a longer story. Erm, I think I knew I was different from about 14; 13, 14, it was whenever Tipping the Velvet was on the TV.

I: [Laugh]

WZC8Y: And I remember that being on and being like ‘OK’. But I was very Christian upbringing , erm, never, was never appalled by the idea of being with men and so I thought I would grow out of it , so I had boyfriends and quite serious relationships , and people went home and met my mum and I lived with somebody, and was in heterosexual relationships until I was 24. Erm, had flings on the side, had threesomes , was interesting to boys because I liked to do things with girls. And then actually when I was about 24 I met my ex and realised it was more than that, and felt very different , for the first time felt a different kind of happiness, a different kind of erm, I can’t remember the words I’m looking for, just more real I think, more genuine. So even though I’d had happy relationships and I’d never been miserable and I’d never thought ‘ugh I don’t want to have sex with this person’ or ‘ugh this person isn’t what I want’, when I then was with a girl it just seemed to tick the boxes, it was on another level almost. She turned out to be an utter moron [laugh] but that’s beside the point. Erm, an absolutely hideous human being but in a way I’ve got her to thank for making me realise who I was, what I was, and initially making me very happy. Erm, and then it kind of went from there and (.) the Christian thing , my mum and stepdad weren’t great when I told them , it took a while. And my mum now has apologised for her behaviour [laugh]. It was not an easy time, coming out, but they’re on board with it now and we’re, you know, I’ve just recently got married and my mum was the most annoying mother of the bride ever with taking over [laugh]. But yeah it took a long time to come to terms, I think, with being gay (.) to accept it for myself to then be confident enough to (.) you know almost force other people to be accepting of it.

I: And what do you think influenced you in starting to accept that?

WZC8Y: I think you get, I was caught up in a moment and initially when I went for this drink with C\*\*\*\*\* after work one day, wasn’t with her and thought to ending up in a relationship with her or anything like that . But I’d always had this thing with girls, I’d slept with girls and had these kind of on/off, nothing serious, so when it started with her obviously initially it was just a fling and it would’ve just been another, you know, something until what I thought would be the next heterosexual erm relationship came along. And then actually as time developed and I was with her and saw how she was in her life and how her life was turning out, how accepting people were of her (.) and her life how she lived it, made you, me think actually ‘no this is where I fit more, this is where, how I feel’ and it fits better than where I’d tried to make myself fit for the whole of my life.

I: And do you think, it sounds like maybe the fact that she’d managed to come out and live that lifestyle quite happily, did that make you feel like that was more doable for you than it might have been?

WZC8Y: Yeah, and like how accepting her parents were of her and I mean she was butcher than me so I still have the problem now (.) problem trying, like if I was on my own trying to get into a gay bar, the amount of times I’ve been turned away because I don’t look gay, whereas if I was with C\*\*\*\*\*, or when I am with L\*\*\*, my wife now, or other people who I’m now friends with , you wouldn’t get turned away because people look more like what people expect lesbians to look like. So she was, so therefore her statement was she didn’t have to say anything because if you can’t tell by looking at me then you’re stupid, whereas with me (.) I still have to tell people. But then I think in a way that makes me more proud of it , because, they laugh at work that I will walk into somewhere and be like ‘hi, I’m \*\*\*\*\*\*, I’m a lesbian’ [laugh]. It’s like, it’s maybe, maybe taking so long to come to terms with it means now that I’m really proud of it and I want everyone to know, because it’s something that I’ve had to kind of be happy with.

I: Interestingly we are kind of skipping ahead to one of my other questions

WZC8Y: Sorry [laugh]

I: so I will bring that up now actually since we’re on the subject. Erm, which is about erm, the way that gender and sexual identities can influence and co-create one another, so erm, we’re kind of here talking about the role of masculinity or appearing or presenting as masculine, and how that erm intersects with being a lesbian, erm so do you think you’ve had different experiences yourself as a n, as a feminine presenting lesbian, and do you think that those two identities can influence how each other develops, like h, have you ever felt like maybe you wanted to try presenting as masculine so that you fit more into that stereotype, or have you ever felt like your identity as a lesbian is not as legitimate as a masculine presenting lesbian, or do you think they’re two completely separate things that are unrelated?

WZC8Y: No I think they are related , and I think each, each end of the spectrum you have your different problems, so I think when you’re a feminine lesbian you’re less likely to experience the prejudice if you’re a girl out in the street . No one would ever look at me and have kind of homophobic thoughts about me or look at me in disgust because they would never know unless they knew me or they saw me holding hands with Lucy, whereas I think obviously if you look what people think as a stereotype you’re more open to the kind of abuse and the looks and the, the people who just disagree. But then sometimes within your own community I, you do feel like you don’t fit , because it’s almost like why, but, with the day and age we’re in you shouldn’t have to conform to what society thinks you should look like, to feel a part of your own community. So you’re standing at a, a door to a gay bar and it’s like well why should I have to prove to you whether I’m gay or straight, I want to come into this bar to feel safe in an environment that’s meant for you know , where, the community I feel I fit in and you’re questioning whether I should be here. So I don’t know how you, then how do you go about proving that and sometimes you just have to walk away because unless you’re on the arm of somebody or you can randomly find somebody to snog [laugh] it’s, you can’t really prove it. So then that, that is a hard thing to, to deal with.

I: Do you think that your femininity made it, erm, less obvious to you that you m, were a lesbian or do you think it didn’t have any impact on

WZC8Y: I think possibly, erm, I think it was easier to hide it from everybody, so even though, I mean at university I was playing around and I knew , you know I was having affairs or having like little experiments and experiences, but even my closest friends didn’t necessarily know about all of it because it’s the last thing they almost would’ve expected, and then when I did come out so many people said ‘well, we really didn’t expect it. So I think (.) it’s (.) I’ve lost my train of thought [laugh]. It’s erm, ah what was I talking about? Erm

I: Being feminine as a lesbian and how that impacts on your identity

WZC8Y: Yeah it’s easier to hide, so I think like and because I’[d done such a good job of being straight and had not had unhappy relationships and kept it from my parents, it was harder for them . Because I obviously didn’t look like what they expected a lesbian to look like , erm.

I: Have you ever tried presenting as more masculine?

WZC8Y: No because I don’t think I’d really pull it off, erm, and one of the things my mum, I had to reassure my mum that I wasn’t going to like cut my hair off and start wearing dungarees and get rid of you know my dresses and makeup and things, and I was like that’s not what it’s about, that’s not what anyone is about, you don’t choose to feel how you feel, kind of thing. Erm, we did a gig once where, it was for Comic Relief, when I was at uni, and er we did a vice versa, so the horns section the guys put dresses on and we put tuxes on and drew moustaches, that’s about the most I’ve ever [laugh] come as kind of switching how I present. I just, it’s not me. And I’ve never felt that it needs to be me.

I: So it almost sounds like for you personally your gender and your sexuality have no relationship with one another but in terms of societal expectations there are expectations about how you look depending on your sexuality.

WZC8Y: Yeah. Yeah I think so, erm, which is why I think I’m always very, I’m very open with who and what I am. So I will always speak, you know if I’m speaking I’ll always use ‘she’ and it’s much easier now it’s wife because you have no confusion between partner and fiancé; it’s wife, she’s clearly a girl, the person I’m talking about, I’m clearly married to a woman. And I’m very open with that, I’ve never been shy of using the right, using a pronoun rather than making it just a ‘my partner’ erm. But in a way I have to do that else people wouldn’t know and then you have those conversations where you do say ‘oh my fiancé’, ‘oh what does he do?’, ‘well, she..’

I: [Laugh]

WZC8Y: and it’s, but yeah, I wouldn’t necessarily, I don’t think I, like you say, my, how I, the fact that I’m a woman and that I’m a lesbian and that I’m girly, I don’t necessarily think about that. But I do feel like I need to make that clear to society because they would never know .

I: OK

WZC8Y: But then why do I feel like I have to make that clear to society? That’s a can of worms I think [laugh]

I: Yes I agree [laugh], I have the same problems. Erm, just backtracking slightly, you talked about your parents’ religious beliefs. Would you say that you, er, have a religion? Do you affiliate with a religion?

WZC8Y: Yeah, I mean, we’re, a Christian upbringing and like real serious churchgoers and (.) so yeah twice on a Sunday a lot of the time when I was younger, and do music within church as well, so you, it’s such a family. And I think (.) it’s hard because I really want to believe it. I would class myself still as Christian . Erm, I’d like to think that there’s something bigger, but then, all the, you know, have the usual conflicts of well if there’s somebody why is the world so shit, why is there so much bad? But then I think that it’s that, it’s human comfort to look for something, just to, you know, put your eyes up to the sky and say ‘please can you help me’, or ‘please can this go right’, or ‘can you just make this person happy’ or ‘please show me a way to fix this problem’. Erm, so I’d like to think that there’s something there, erm that I have some faith in, there must be a purpose to everything and there must be a reason why you go through the things you go through and why the world is as it is.

I: Ok, and in that case, I have two questions based on that. One of which is what do you think has been the impact of your religious beliefs on your own feelings about your identity, and also how do you think that impacted er your relationship with your parents and their influence in terms of your identity.

WZC8Y: I think, it frustrates me that it, in a way hindered me being myself for so long . And I wonder sometimes you know how different would my uni years have been if I was out and I hadn’t spent those years in heterosexual relationships, sat with my friends going, you know, chasing boys and things, but then (.) the group of friends I’ve got are primarily , my university friends are all straight, so maybe if I’d have been in a different crowd of people they wouldn’t be my best friends, my best friend wouldn’t be my best friend, so therefore that must be one of the reasons why. So yes there is part of me that wishes, if I, I’d thought the world was more accepting or I hadn’t thought ‘well that’s not the right way to do things, this is the right way to do things, I’ll grow out of that it’s just a phase’, then I would be in a different place, but then maybe the world, the life wouldn’t have worked out. Maybe then C\*\*\*\*\* wouldn’t have been my first which wouldn’t have meant she wouldn’t have treated me like I did to then get the confidence from that. L\*\*\* [wife] kind of pieced me back together a little bit when we first met, and if I hadn’t have been in that state maybe that wouldn’t. So there’s the chain of events, erm, and I think with my parents there was a rocky few weeks or so, erm, I didn’t tell them in the best way. Because it’s hard to try and pick a time and a place, and in the end it, it was kind of blurted out [laugh]

I: [Laugh]

WZC8Y: And they weren’t great and they didn’t react very well, and it was upsetting and it made me really sad at the time. But it also made them sad and then I think also I presented such a, you know, a version of myself to them for so many years that it was a big shock. I hadn’t, they had no idea that I’d been dabbling, they had no ideas that I even had these thoughts , so to them, 24 years old, it’s a real, it was a bolt out of the blue and I think they, they didn’t react very well, but they also just needed some time to get their head around it, and I actually think our relationship’s stronger because of it, and I’m very close with them now. I talk to my mum more than I did before I came out because you’re always hiding something so you can’t really , if you’ve got such a big secret you can’t form a kind of truthful relationship if you’re keeping something so fundamental about yourself hidden from somebody. So now that there are no secrets it’s actually better and the foundations are true and they’re supportive and they absolutely love L\*\*\* [wife] and would, you know there was no question of of her being accepted into the family. They were there at the wedding , my dad and my stepdad made speeches, and everybody, they love her to pieces, some of the family photos with my dad and my stepdad hugging L\*\*\* [wife] and they look so happy in them. Just because, I mean, she is lovely and wha, they just want me to be happy.

I: So erm, when you first came out, did you come out to anybody before your parents, what was the process, did you come out to them because you were in a relationship or was it outside of that context, did you, did you speak to anybody else about it first?

WZC8Y: I had come out to people before then . My brother, I told my brother . I’ve always been very close with him. Erm and he was fine. I actually my, my, my dad, my biological dad in the, in Octo, in October. And I thought he would be the worst, and I was in actual tears on the phone to him because I thought there was, you know, I thought you’re going to hate me, you’re never going to talk to me again.

I: Like this October?

WZC8Y: No, like when I was 24 [laugh]

I: [Laugh] ok I see.

WZC8Y: So it would have been whenever

I: So that was before or after?

WZC8Y: Before my mum. And, so my brother already knew, some friends knew, erm, a lot of my friends I kind of told in the summer when it was happening, so I got with C\*\*\*\*\* in July, August time, would have been about 2011, 10 or 11, 10 maybe. And my dad actually in the October, he called me and I was crying about, and he was like ‘what’s wrong what’s wrong?’ and I was like ‘oh I think I’m in love with a woman’, and he was just like, he was like ‘that’s fine’, he pulled his car over because I was crying and he was like ‘I thought you were going to tell me you’d killed somebody, but that’s fine, I don’t care, that’s great’, so the only thing he wouldn’t want me to ever do is kill someone [laugh] so that’s fine, that’s a long list of things I can do. So he was, he was really understanding. My brother was, had, didn’t bat an eyelid, but I think he’d been a bit more aware of it anyway, always been quite close with him so he knew of things that perhaps I’d been getting up to at uni and stuff . And I didn’t actually tell my mum until the January, as I was trying to find a time, I didn’t want to do it over the phone , I didn’t want to make that call and then put the phone down and not deal with it, erm, but then because I was then by then in a relationship with C\*\*\*\*\*, I was scared that something was going to go on Facebook , that she’d piece it together and I didn’t think it was right for her to either suss it out or hear it from somebody that wasn’t me. So I think (.) it came out when it did because it had to. Erm and it was, it was that thing of maybe telling them face to face wasn’t the best way, but I still think probably it was better than finding out through kind of a third party.

I: And what was your experience when you came out to other people, and who who, who were they?

WZC8Y: Most people were ok, like people were surprised , and there was quite a lot of shock and there were a few people who thought perhaps that was a phase, that it was just that I’d fallen for this person and it would be short lived and then I’d go back to what they’d always known, erm, but generally people were accepting I think, I’m from an artsy fartsy musician friends background , and every other person is gay and it’s just that it’s never an issue, it’s just it’s, it’s just recognised that people and people and who you love doesn’t matter who you love kind of thing. Erm, and my friends just were as I say probably a bit surprised but then very quickly just it was, then it became the norm. And I remember R\*\*\*\*\*, who’s my best friend, saying erm probably about a month or so after I’d told her, she was like ‘I don’t think I can remember what it was like when you were straight’ [laugh]. So it’s like, because I think they could see that I was more relaxed, and I was more you know they were seeing a more genuine me than they’d ever seen.

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