

Transcript

27 October 2025, 06:28pm

● **Paul Bench** started transcription

Participant A 0:03

Kind of work that I think we need to record permanently in terms of keeping queer archives and really teach this stuff because you're in the danger of getting lost or the danger of getting some of this, the trans stuff that we've been teaching lost in the next while and I'm bit concerned about it. So yeah.

Paul Bench 0:21

Excellent. So thank you for that. And you've already signed the consent form and everything. So I've got 123456 basic questions that kind of form the framework and it's a short.

Participant A 0:28

Yeah.

Paul Bench 0:40

Interview so, but I'd be interested to know how you can elaborate on some of those, but just to let you know, if I start being a little more formal and I might sort of ask you little questions in between or to sort of elaborate or whatever.

Participant A 0:41

OK.

I understand. I just said, I guess you've gone through the ethics process and you are asking the same question the same way every time and all of that, yeah.

Paul Bench 0:56

Yeah.

Well, I hope so. You're my first interviewee so.

Participant A 1:05

Alright, but OK, great. Oh well. Oh, thank you. How it would an honour. That's great. Yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 1:11

The the honour is all mine. So you're part of the LGBTQ plus staff network and agreed to participate in the study about LGBTQ plus slash queer subjectivity. Teaching and learning. If you feel comfortable too, could you describe how you identify and what your role is at UAL?

Participant A 1:34

Certainly. Yeah. So my name is Mike Wilde, and I identify as gay man, but as an ally for all other parts of the rainbow. I am gay, man. I often say and have said for a long time. And I'm queer because I think it's a better term. I learned it from Maggie Hambling, the artist, Maggie Hambling, who said the great Derek Jarman.

Said said, say queer. And then I said, well, what? What? What do you mean by that? And she said, well, Derek would have said it's because it's all the people who end up in the ovens.

PB **Paul Bench** 1:57

OK.

In the ovens.

Participant A 2:05

And I was in the ovens in Auschwitz and it was very, very moving and very, very powerful. And I thought queer is a term that works for me so, but I'm a gay man and I at LCC, I'm a senior lecturer where I teach sound design and I often include queer content within my thing.

PB **Paul Bench** 2:08

OK.

Participant A 2:24

And that I think I was hired for that. In fact, it even says it. I think in my job description that I that I will talk about things like that.

PB **Paul Bench** 2:32

Oh, that's interesting. Did it? Did it specify that they wanted somebody who could discuss queer content or was it just OK?

Participant A 2:40

It did. Yeah. So this is confidential. So they I guess so. They had a they would. There was an issue at the university. There was a as at the in the department that there was a lot of queer students, a lot of LGBTQ students, trans students, all kinds of people. Everybody Paul walks alive and and they had complained that they felt that stories. That, that it dealt with LGBTQ issues were being marginalised and and that they're that basically the course was run by the the classic bugbear old white men as an old white man, we have been very aware of that and and so yeah, so and and so they they actually they were actually seeking.

Somebody who could who could do that night and I've worked a lot in in queer cinema and wrote my first MA on the subject of queer theory back in 1993.

PB **Paul Bench** 3:28

Wow. OK, amazing. OK, so I mean, I guess we're focusing on LGBTQ plus slash queer subjectivity, but are there perhaps?

Participant A 3:29

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 3:45

Are there other aspects of your identity that you think are kind of dominant in your interactions with students as well or?

Participant A 3:54

Yes. So I have a trans niece and she's been out and transitioned, you know, going on 10 years ago now. And so trans experience has been very much a part of my life. And I had a best friend who came out to me as trans 25 years ago, and we made a. I really.

Great film together and a couple really great films together. Well, great. I don't know. That's for other people to say, but but the but the but. And so and so. So I identify

strongly as an ally and I guess as a listener for all other positions on that and I learn all the time. You know, I learned I learned a lot about.

Binary identity from this role and from the people identify section.

PB **Paul Bench** 4:41

You mentioned about the department and being run by old men are there are there factors of your identity aside from from your?

Participant A 4:48

Yes.

PB **Paul Bench** 4:55

LGBTQ, gay, gay you described yourself as a gay man. Your gay identity, just that, that intersect with that. Do you? Do you feel that?

Participant A 4:59

Yeah, absolutely.

Yes.

Yeah, I feel I feel, definitely feel that I'm very aware of intersectionality and I and I and I feel it every day. Again. I think a lot of it is personal. You know, I have, I have, you know, we have all kinds of different people in our families. So I have, I have Asian diaspora in my family. I have.

Chinese to ask for my family, Japanese and and so I'm very aware of these, these kinds of the, the kind of the way that we intersect with one another and and so and really the important thing for us as a arts institution is is all and particularly in a storytelling format.

As the screen school is that we encourage people to to tell those stories and through that we we look after a lot of the the problems that other parts of culture perhaps don't think about as much. So if you're making, if you're telling your own story and you're telling and those stories are quite diverse.

We we kind of side we don't we don't get away Scott free but we we sort of like we have the ability to address the issues in a ways other than just arguing about it or stating our position.

PB **Paul Bench** 6:19

Excellent. So like your your job and your role and your teaching is centred on kind of telling those stories and or giving students the opportunities too. Excellent.

Participant A 6:29

I I absolutely encourage it.

Paul Bench 6:33

So do you have any thoughts about how your identity relates to your teaching practise? Perhaps expanding on some of the things you've already begun to say?

Participant A 6:44

I I think I think it makes me I think my identity makes me empathetic, I guess and and aware of of other people's situations, other people's problems. I also have AAI guess a mild form of neurodiversity, that it's no big deal. I I have a.

Paul Bench 6:51

Yeah.

Participant A 7:02

Dyspraxia, which you know, we're increasingly aware that some students have have issues with around that. It's mostly manifest itself physically, but it's also a brain processing thing. So I'm kind of aware of those kinds of issues, about 33 to 40% of people who are working in art and design have some form of neurodiversity.

So I'm kind of aware that those those sort of things. So how does it inform the teaching, I guess is the question.

Is that the question? Sorry your last.

Paul Bench 7:29

You have thought about how your identity relates to your teaching practise.

Participant A 7:33

Yes, it relates to it in the following ways. First of all, in the examples of the diaspora films and television shows that we explore, so I include some. I include a lot, a great deal of LGBTQ content.

And it's almost in in the pathway of decolonizing the curriculum, we start to think

about some of those old, the, the, the, the, the classic film studies type material that has been shared traditionally. You know, it doesn't speak to a lot of people, young people for a variety of reasons.

So everything from I've included things from Thai queer cinema, from Chinese queer cinema, from from, obviously English language, American, Australian, Canadian, Queer cinema in those things, alongside some of the other examples of of. Cinemas that we that we watch and listen to that that are part of the Canon and thinking about things like Hitchcock, often show clips from rope thinking about which the two gay men who end up murdering somebody. But just thinking about those kind of cliches, I steer clear of things that are obviously triggering.

PB **Paul Bench** 8:40

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 8:48

In the sense that we just don't need to make somebody's day worse. So you know, I'm not gonna, you know, I'm not gonna show silence of the lambs, even though it is a great film and there's there's better trans commentators than myself who've said why it's a great film but it but these, but these, these, these things show up these, these things.

Show up and we're seeing a lot of that kind of representation coming back. That's actually quite triggering. We're seeing Ryan Murphy, obviously, you know you're doing things about serial killers and particularly queer serial killers and. And so we're seeing that kind of representation that maybe isn't always so.

Welcome, coming back from my point of view anyway. And so it informs it in that I am very aware of how of, of, of, of placing the students in a culture that both at times can celebrate their identities and at times can make things worse for them.

So you have to be aware of both of those things. How do you counteract something? How do you make make, make things against the grain?

Mm-hmm.

PB **Paul Bench** 10:02

I was sort of in a position to sort of been brought on to kind of do this, but I'm presuming that the cohort isn't entirely queer or LGBT, so I just wondered how? I'm just thinking this is not a fault. One of my formal questions, but.

Participant A 10:09

Hmm.

No.

PB **Paul Bench** 10:22

How the student body reacts to the material and also to your sort of presentation.

Participant A 10:26

Yeah.

Yeah. So we have not everything, not everything is for everyone and obviously we have a lot, you know, Lion's share of our students are cisgender and heterosexual and but they are storytellers. And so and storytelling that they're, you know they a lot of young.

PB **Paul Bench** 10:44

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 10:50

A lot of.

Straight students had straight students. They want to also start to tell these stories or tell a greater include greater diversity of character knowing, knowing that it makes storytelling better. You know that that is fundamentally the thing that I think the university is quite good at. Is, is is showing that how?

Most of the courses are in some way about storytelling, and I and and the stories are better when they're more diverse and I. And so I think that's what the students do. Occasionally you get a reaction I, you know, from from a a young student who's reacted against it. A young man often, but usually it's.

It's not. It doesn't come out in the way that you you think it does. And the other thing is we don't, we don't prevent them from telling any sort of story. So. So you know most of the lion's share of the stories are about cis het relationships and/or the cis het people in the world and. And so that is not.

Usually an issue at this university, I've not seen it as a problem at previous universities I've seen where I've worked. I've seen some issues around, particularly race. You know, we've we've seen the problem I saw at my previous job.

A problem of a of one particular young white men having a problem with the number of Chinese students in his group, and that was and that's some kind of interesting problem I I don't know if this kind of thing is a problem at this university.

PB **Paul Bench** 12:17

Right.

Hmm.

Participant A 12:28

To be honest, we don't. We don't ever see examples or anything around that I suspect because it's out there in wider culture that there probably is some thinking because once somebody tells you to think it thing, you think it. So it might, it might be out there, but I don't know. So yeah, we might see some of that. I'm not sure I'm not.

PB **Paul Bench** 12:49

I I I I guess you if if it was significant you would likely have have either intuited that or observed, observed observed it in the classroom or.

Participant A 13:03

Yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 13:05

Had to deal with a formal something or other.

Participant A 13:07

Yeah, I've never seen anything.

PB **Paul Bench** 13:10

So I think you've really kind of covered a lot of my following question, which was in what ways do you think your identity so your identity is a gay man. Let's let's say we might add in, you know, factors of age or nationality or whatever you want.

Participant A 13:22

Mm-hmm.

That's it.

PB **Paul Bench** 13:29

You know, we're focused on a sexual identity in these questions. So in what ways do you think your identity does or doesn't relate to the style and content of your teaching? So you've talked a lot about the content. Is there a style of your teaching practise that you think?

Participant A 13:41

And.

PB **Paul Bench** 13:46

Does relate to your sexual identity or your identity as a gay man?

Participant A 13:50

Aye.

Yeah. So there's a couple of things. I think that there, I mean, if we think pedagogically, there's obviously some theory going on there and you know, I back to the PG cert, the PTA and all of that. So I'm very aware of the following. One of the things I learned in the PG CERT is about.

Do in in art and design is that it's better to to do and make and then talk about the theory afterwards and we can address the theory. But the important thing is to make things to do things and less chalk and talk. I certainly learned that in things. So I have, I have that that in there there's also.

So an open style of teaching that I had that actually unfortunately I learned in Canada where I'm from and I've taught in Japan and Australia in here and I and I think there's, you know there's I think teaching is less hierarchical.

And I think teaching in the UK, you know, sometimes friends will say, oh, you know, when I was a kid, the teacher used to say this, these horrible, withering, withering complaints and withering comments and and putting you down that in Canada that, that, that even four years ago would have would have.

Have had you under disciplinary? You know there's no. So I kind of think you you have to it's a very.

Much kind of yes. And teaching. Yes. And we will do this, yes and yes and and

expanding their each time adding things to it and saying, OK, this is a great idea, but have you considered, have you considered? And so it's about opening their minds to what is possible.

When we're young, particularly on LGBTQ issues, when you're making those kind of films, this is when it gets hard. We've all been to film festivals and we've seen the coming outs, Jordan.

PB **Paul Bench** 15:30

OK.

Hmm.

I I I mean you referenced your training in the PGcert and and your experiences elsewhere. Do you think that that the way that you are teaching and you're teaching person what you've just described about an open style and doing before?

Participant A 15:43

Yes. Yeah.

Hmm.

PB **Paul Bench** 15:58

Theorising is that purely from.

Your training or is there any aspect that you think relates the other content that relates to you know how you go about things in the classroom and engage with students that does or do you think it does not relate to your identity?

As a gay man.

Participant A 16:24

I think yes, absolutely. I think that I come from that. I guess that kind of world of gay men of like, well, let's make something. Let's put on a show in the barn. Let's do what we can and let's make a thing in that big happy way. Like, however, we can make a film. Let's make it.

And let's let's put on show. Let's do a show like you. You can't figure out how to do it. We'll get upstairs at the pub. We'll go to the RVT. We'll go wherever and see what you can throw at the wall and see if it'll stick. And so I think that that, that gay process of making stuff and again, roping your friends in. I'm not very visual. So I. People, a big bunch of phone numbers of people who are really good production

designers and and dramaturges and so forth and not very good with actors and stuff like that. But I know that there's people who are good with actors and then there are people who are good, you know? So. So I think there is a there is something about the networking aspect of gay men.

PB **Paul Bench** 17:23

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 17:23

That makes has made it, I think, to some extent easier. You know, you kind of talked to colleagues and they have told say, for example, a straight story. They've made a short film and they wanted to get it out there into the world.

And they have been had very little success of that and we go to each other's shows and we go to each other's films and we go and see this stuff. So we often have a great deal of success within the Community that makes us confident in the storytelling.

And and that's something that's unique to us. So it doesn't affect the story. It does affect the way I teach.

PB **Paul Bench** 18:01

Excellent. That's interesting. Do you can you elaborate maybe on what you think maybe this is just my personal interest now that the gay community, if we can call it that?

Participant A 18:11

Yeah.

Yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 18:18

Umm.

Is related to making practises you expanded on network and how things can happen. Do you think that you think there's more about that and perhaps also like how that comes into the classroom and?

Participant A 18:24

Mm-hmm.

PB **Paul Bench** 18:35

And benefit the students.

Participant A 18:36

It does benefit the students and you can tell it right from right from the the terminology that is used around the BBC.

I'm allowed to hear people call it auntie and I don't know how old you are. I don't know. I don't know if you know this expression, auntie, it's called the BBC and it comes from Polaris comes.

PB **Paul Bench** 18:50

Yeah.

OK.

Participant A 18:56

The secret language, Soho. And it is that you arrive off the on the train on the bus. You from walking, whatever you arrive in London and you arrive in the gay parts of London, whether it's east London or Soho or whatever. And somebody will tell you some some fabulous old person older queen will say to you.

Darling, go siante and and this was a a very common pathway for working class people to go and work at ABC and and you know, when I first landed in London, I went there and I got a little job at Radio 5. And you know, that kind of stuff. And and this is the 90s. And I got the little jobs here and they're doing things and all from gay men.

That that I I met, you know, just just through gay land, you know. And that that's still true. I I still see that. So what I think one of the ways that it I it comes across in the teaching is that I encourage students to form networks networks of people.

PB **Paul Bench** 19:48

None.

Thanks.

Hmm.

Participant A 20:04

That that kind of goes along with it and you know the all of it, all of television. You know, we've seen the students at the moment that these, this gay television and film. I mean it is the most repeated thing at the moment, you hear. I hear constantly things that come from that, get things from the movie character. Paris is burning that Ru Paul 17 years ago started talking about Paris is burning and and infused that television programme with the language now arguably the most watched television programme on Earth. You hear the kids constantly slay constantly. You know, it's like they did the language and from television and from what was.

PB **Paul Bench** 20:37

Aye.

Participant A 20:43

Originally from downtown New York, Central London is now common everyday language Gramsci. You know, it's like it's like we we we make things happen and we'll I think it will always be the way I think it'll always be the way when. So there was a heyday of queer making or game making or whatever. And I think the individual. Communities in the LGBTQ do the same thing. You know, a lot of I've helped out a lot of women friends who are making films and and help them put together networks of people that want to do, like, women only cruise and stuff like that. And some very successful films and and. And, you know, they also have the same thing. And sometimes it's.

Across border, right. So you kind of thing there. And so I think that we are we are really good networkers, network makers and that is something that I talk to the students about all the time. Sometimes my colleagues will even say to me, how do you know these people? And I'm just like.

Oh, that was. I met him at the Admiral. Duncan met him at the King's arms. Oh, yeah, that guy. You know what I mean? It's like these. This is just life. And you, you know.

PB **Paul Bench** 21:43

Yeah.

I just wonder how, aside from just saying to the students, I encourage you to, like,

maintain networks and this is how things happen. Do you do anything more to encourage that or is it just?

Participant A 21:59

Yeah.

I I say it and that's a problem. I really, you know, it's not my role to kind of make them do that, but I suppose how one of the ways we do it is in crewing for films that in crewing, for ideas, crewing for things is that when they're putting together their crews and people, they want to work with.

Paul Bench 22:09

Yeah.

Participant A 22:20

That they start to think about, you know, well, look at look at, you know, people who don't have a role. Look at the broad cross section of stories that are being told which one interests you and and over time, you, you you find that you you start to gravitate towards people and and you will and you will find your your network of people.

People and and and so we talk about it in those terms. I know my colleagues do as well. It is a problem of art and design in all countries, but particularly this country in the US that people hire their friends, it's what's preventing EDI from working. In some ways, you know, they keep saying the BBC is all white.

And all of this kind of stuff and it's because everybody has their friends and it it and and so the the network part of it is important and I wouldn't want to deny that. And so I encourage them to think about it in a way maybe what I'm encouraging is a kind of toxic culture, but I'm not sure if I'm thinking about it, really criticising it.

Paul Bench 23:02

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 23:18

On the other hand, it works and you start to build a community of practise and you start to build a group of people who you can work with and trust perhaps, yeah.

Paul Bench 23:27

And.

Yeah. Thank you. So thinking again about your students and your your teaching practise, to what extent and in what ways do you think your identity, your identity as a gay man impacts on your relationship to students in diverse?

Participant A 23:43

OK.

Yeah.

OK.

Paul Bench 23:48

First circumstances and can you think of examples?

Participant A 23:53

Yes, I can. And I think it mostly comes down to some of the pastoral care elements. There are times when I notice that a student is struggling and so I would say that the pastoral care element becomes a very big thing.

Paul Bench 24:03

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 24:10

You know, I have at the end of my e-mail signature, you might have seen it at the the Progress Pride flag with the circle and and all of the colours and I regularly have students come out to me sometimes about sexuality, sometimes about gender. I'm very I'm very open about having a trans niece who works in film. She's a big deal film.

Paul Bench 24:23

Right.

Participant A 24:29

Editor and so the and so the. So I regularly talk about that. So in what way does it in in inform that so in I. So I'm aware in a pastoral care element that that there are students who are struggling see it all the time.

Yeah.

I don't openly say anything about it to them when I can see them struggling, but I will provide at the end of a class some information on particular things. I will say you know, here is the LGBTQ film makers go up on campus. Here is the here is the gay men's this here is that I.

Have I will if a student does come out to me, I tell my line manager just so they know I'm having the meeting. I leave the door open. I have a one-on-one meeting and I give them all the information that I can. I even give them sexual health information. I talk to them about 56 and 33 Dean St and and the ways in which they need to take care of.

 **Paul Bench** 25:15

No.

Participant A 25:27

Themselves, and I'm quite open about that and I told my line manager that I would be doing that and I gave a list of the information that I would be getting. So including the Samaritans, the the helpline, transfer resources and so forth.

And yeah, so particularly with young trans people at the moment, I'm very aware of that. We have a lot of trans people and when I will say a lot, I'd say out of each cohort of between 60 and 100, there are three to four, which is high.

 **Paul Bench** 25:57

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 25:58

Which is high, so the and so we have a a significant number higher than that of people who who use non binary I think so I'm very aware and conscious of that and the process by which you do that, I try to act as a leader for colleagues as well in that context of what you're talking about. So when when a.

Colleague will say something like oh so and so's changed their pronouns. And I say, yeah, it's great. And they're like, oh, but I just don't know what to say. I'm always. I do. My, my little speech like, well, you know, if you make a mistake, apologise and move on. I'm sorry. And move on and.

And so trying to help them through those kinds of things actually during that way, I guess and and so yeah, that's that's largely how I think I'm very self-conscious. What

about you in teaching, I'm very self-conscious about around being around young gay men.

I, as an old man, I don't want to seem like a lech. It doesn't interest me to sleep with a student, but it's obviously the kind of thing that that has been in our past. We have been accused of as gay men. I don't know if or not, but they, but they I I but the the the thing that we've been accused of in the past, sleeping with students or something like that or being attracted.

To younger men or whatever the hell the trope is. And so the problem is I have digested that. So I'm very aware of keeping arm's distance from young gay men and providing only the information that I need to, and so that that.

PB **Paul Bench** 27:24

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 27:27

Does it almost now that way, it's almost like a limitation in the same way that I wouldn't do to a young heterosexual man something, I guess so kind of where that. But I'm I'm still supportive and that kind of thing. So I'm kind of slightly aware of that. That does affect me, yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 27:41

How do you feel about that?

Participant A 27:44

It's hideous that I've absorbed it. You know, I I could just. I remember when I was young and you know, I'm in my 50s. I remember people saying, well, they shouldn't be teachers. Well, they shouldn't be teachers. And I love teaching university age students. But when I first my first teaching qualification in Canada, I really want to teach the little ones.

PB **Paul Bench** 27:54

Yeah.

Participant A 28:02

I love little kids. I think they're the best. But you know, like, and I I see it now and I

see, like, men being teaching primary school. And I I kind of think oh, that looks great. I mean, you know, you're talking about, you know, people, little ones and they're amazing. So I am very aware of it. And I'm very like assisted like, you know.

PB **Paul Bench** 28:03

Yeah.

Participant A 28:21

Kind of like I wish I I wish I hadn't absorbed all of that when I was younger. And I I'm hoping that that doesn't happen, although I understand it's, they still have a a problem attracting men towards teaching primary school. Yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 28:35

How do you feel about what you indicated was your way of holding back in some ways in your current role with with HE students?

Participant A 28:47

Yes, you know. Yeah. So for example, there are times when a student will want to, they'll do well in something or whatever and they want to give you a hug. I don't hug. Young men. Hug the girls, that kind of stuff. I'm just really aware of it. Again. The fist bump, that kind of stuff. Girls having a hug. That's fine.

PB **Paul Bench** 28:59

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 29:07

But I'm just kind of self-conscious of stuff like that and self-conscious of yeah, I'm just self-conscious of those kind of things I provide. I think what I provide is incredible support for them and tell them how things are going and and that kind of stuff.

Certainly talk to a lot of students who come out to me, so it's I've been here 2 1/2 years and I guess there's six connecting us to, to, to, to, to have a discussion and talk about it, talk them through it. I'm gonna. I always recommend a sport to them. Get into a sport, play softball. You know, that kind of stuff and.

You know, rather than going to bars and and that that kind of thing. So I'm still

supportive, but I'm just aware of that, making sure I'm I have the couple of times seen students at out, you know, go to go somewhere for a drink and the student is there and they're coming up to talk to you and always try to keep my. Distance, you know, make sure I keep my distance. You know, that kind of thing.

PB **Paul Bench** 30:05

Do you think that that's because you're?

Concerned on a personal level because as you said, you've absorbed a kind of history of politics or or because of the institution that you're working in.

Participant A 30:16

Yeah, yeah.

Well, I think it's very important to maintain your distance, but at the same time, I also think I've absorbed a lot of nonsense. There's no, you know, there's no real there's no real reason not to be friendly. And I'm friendly enough. But it's just that that thing for like.

PB **Paul Bench** 30:28

Yeah.

Participant A 30:37

Just being aware to, yeah, it's always there. It's. I don't know how to describe it. It's like a, a kind of like, oh, you, you know, you have to be careful. You have to watch yourself. You have to do this kind of thing. Yeah. It's really. It's really weird. It's like, you know, it's like it's quite funny because I'm in no way attracted to people.

PB **Paul Bench** 30:45

Yeah.

Participant A 30:57

Younger than me, I my partner is a Big Bear and I am. We've been married, we've been together for 25 years and I I don't, you know. I don't want anything like that. So it's quite like a weird thing to think about. But yeah, I guess I'm aware of it. Yeah, I'm out and I and I and I and I talk about outwork and how people can.

PB **Paul Bench** 31:11

Hmm.

Participant A 31:17

Make our work and generate generate that those kind of stories. And but I also am aware of my interaction with them.

PB **Paul Bench** 31:28

Thank you. So a couple of of last questions and you might have touched on some of these ideas already. So we've been thinking about you and your practise and.

Participant A 31:29

Yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 31:43

Also, your experience outside the university, but what observations have you made regarding LGBTQ plus or queer students in your classes? So what, what? And in some ways I'm I I understand that that's loaded because it's sort of.

If they're not telling you as you were just saying it in, directly coming out to you, you're kind of making a kind of mental judgement call about identity there. But what observations have you made of of queer students?

Participant A 32:21

I think LCC and I assume the wider UAL, is a really a really good place for young LGBTQ people to be. I don't know how if it's perfect, but I certainly think it's better than the.

University I went to. I certainly certainly think that the last when I did my second MA which which was actually in the early 2000s, it was a much, it was it was almost a weird place to be because they. So I think it's when I observe them I can see them being out and open.

PB **Paul Bench** 32:54

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 32:54

And I and I'm super. I'm it's really nice to see you see lots of rainbow flags, but you see other types of expression as well. We saw queer core band starting it's more a little bit more cynical. The rainbow flag we saw the the you know those kinds of things and so I see.

I see their their expression and it's amazing I see them doing club nights and I see them doing the films and and writing papers around that and and it's really interesting. They I my observation of students around filmmaking.

PB **Paul Bench** 33:28

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 33:29

Is that that they that we now have an the same thing that heterosexuals have, which is we keep telling the same story over and over again. So, you know, the the classic thing is, you know, student starts and straight student and the and the biggest trauma in their life is perhaps their parents divorce.

Or something like that. And so they write stories around that. We are seeing a lot of young queer LGBTQ students writing stories about coming out, and so often across both film departments. They will send the student to me, and I will say, OK, it's great. But I have been going to lesbian gay film festivals.

For 35 years and I've seen this story before. So the question is, is how are you going to make it stand out enough to play it? All of the festivals, how are you going to reconsider this? And it's around playing around, being more honest, your coming out story is really nice and it's got a really nice background to it. But was it really that easy?

Even in this day and age, is it really easy and so and so encouraging them to tell that that's why I see students in terms of the work they want to make? And then I also see the London effect in international students.

And Rina, what is it is it, is it angels in America that that ring around the city, it protects us, the suburbs, the ring, it protects us and it's. And I think it's alpatino. I can't remember if it's Alpatino says again who gets the line it might be I can't remember who it is well it gives.

One of them, the characters aligned and and it and it's so utterly right. And what we

see is with international students. They arrive, and the first I see this and you know a good few of them. They arrive. And within a few weeks, their expression, their personal expression, their clothing, their hair.

The way the way they socialise, it changes. We see a lot of young women from international students whose hair colour changes, whose hairstyle changes, who clothes, thing changes and it's slowly a more queer expression.

Regardless of I don't know their sexualities, but it's certainly a queer look, we see the way they they start to look like London and and and it's a really interesting thing. So those are my observations, I would say mainly of the students, the the issue of how they present themselves is certainly really interesting how it changes in the three years.

Yeah, they become art students. They become, you know, yeah. Yeah. Exactly that.

Yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 36:03

You are elefied.

So you mentioned again the type of work that they do and the kind of relative freedoms for LGBTQ or the visibility maybe more so even sort of in UAL as a whole.

Participant A 36:21

Yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 36:25

Thinking on a kind of micro level in your classroom and I don't know how you teach what you teach but is in your observations of who you might read as or know that are queer students. Is there a?

Participant A 36:30

Yeah.

Yeah, yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 36:44

Perceivable difference in how they are within a group or in a way that students interact with them or they interact with you or in interactions in the classroom.

Participant A 36:57

Mm-hmm.

Yes, there is definitely a difference. We we see I think at at UAL we have a really in these particular classrooms in my particular classes, I see a bravery that maybe wouldn't be out there wider in culture. They have a bravery about talking about their stories.

They have a bravery about introducing and flipping the story so they will be in a group telling a story and it's like, Oh well, if we made these two characters the same gender, if we, if we, if we, you know, if we did this, if we did that the the story would change.

And we see this all the time. So we see it all the time. The students are quite fluid in changing things like that on a micro level, the the students, individual students will I think at this university are different. They automatically seem to think in a different way. It's almost.

It's almost like it's almost like a place of other thinking. The other way is the norm. The standard way is not the norm, which I think irks government, that there's all these universities out there where the students are thinking in other ways. You know, they're, I think we surveyed.

You know, if you were in your survey, like, if you surveyed universities, different universities, I think, like where it was before University of Harvitute, even though there was still a strong queer contingent, the students were it wasn't the the perhaps not as fluid as expressing it on like on an everyday level as they are at UAL.

I was RCA, but that's post grad and it's a lot more serious, and they're usually basically already identities completely formed, but they you know, so I think it's on a micro level. It is. They are a lot more fluid, a lot more open about talking about things.

As long as they're making something, if you're they're doing something academic dissertations, 'cause, it's like you could do sound design and they teach dissertation, teach academic writing, that kind of thing. And. And so the and so the sound design part is.

More fun dissertation step. That's when they start to clam up and want to write something very conservative. And I'm always like, well, that's a low haging fruit. What films do you really like? I'll give you an example. Last year a student and I perhaps don't know about her gender, her sexuality. I have no idea.

But and this it's happened again this year. And she came with this idea about writing about 3 very boring films. I don't know Quentin Tarantino, something I don't know, and it's like, are you going to be able to sustain 7000 words? Right? This you don't seem like you like it. And she and she goes. No. And I was like, well, what did you watch most recently? And she was like, Oh well.

On Bravo, I've been watching the Real Housewives of New York, and I was like, well, you can write about Real Housewives of New York and the paper that she wrote was so great. It was so great. It was an A+. Like a rock solid A+. And it got submitted to journals. I don't know. Way to back yet, but it's so good because it's her.

So it's like this thing when it's so there's some times when people are willing to let it go and just talk. And that's usually when they're making something. And then it's the academic part where they kind of hold back where I think we could make some strides instead of people writing the same paper all the time.

PB **Paul Bench** 40:05

Yeah.

Participant A 40:20

Yeah, I think pretty much.

PB **Paul Bench** 40:22

In the kind of student body in the class. So we we're obviously focusing on the the queer content and the queer students is I'm I are there any tensions or divisions or alliances?

Participant A 40:33

Hmm.

Hmm.

PB **Paul Bench** 40:40

But that that you think you know between the students and in their interactions with each other or in Group activities within the classroom that maybe extends outwards that relate to.

Participant A 40:48

Mm-hmm.

PB **Paul Bench** 40:56

Sexual and gender identity you think?

Participant A 40:59

Yeah, sure. Yes. So it's not, it's the young women, the the, the young queer women, they, they, they form groups really easily and they bond together and they and they tell their stories together really easily. They really supportive of each other and I see that.

The gay men, not so much. I think they assume they don't seem to form groups together in the same way that the young women do. But it might be just a men thing, but they do. By the end of it. But at the beginning the, the, the young women are really into telling their stories and getting together and.

And talking and you, I see them standing together. I see them talking together. I see them. You know, they they dare. I heard them talking about. They were saying they were. They were all going to a poetry reading together. And there's and there's a bunch of them and and you know stuff like that. And so it's like very like.

That kind of thing is is. Yes, I do see them forming alliances and stuff like that. We try to fight against that a little bit. So because we know that happens. So what you do is you force groups together, so you say, OK, for this exercise, you've all been randomly assigned.

PB **Paul Bench** 42:07

Yeah.

Participant A 42:08

And and that sort of gets away from some of the clique happening, which will happen with all kinds of different reasons. We had a rugby team, we have a rugby team, we have rug, apparently a rugby team and the rugby kids, gay and straight, all kinds of stuff. They all hang out together.

PB **Paul Bench** 42:17

No.

Participant A 42:26

And I didn't know this and I was like, it's like, and Cogman said, well, you know, they're on the rugby team. I'm like what? We have a rugby team. Apparently we're pretty good. So. So they all, so they they have different, they form alliances. But I I don't know that it's necessarily around sexuality or gender.

PB **Paul Bench** 42:36

OK.

Yeah.

Do you? OK. So so there are a line. Well, what you're talking about is kind of a licence forming in the way that they would in any kind of group, but you don't think that there's a marginalisation or a clip or a group forming that's related to.

Participant A 42:56

Yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 43:04

A shared identity or an antipathy to an identity or anything like that.

Participant A 43:09

So I have seen a couple of times. Nope, just once there's a student because you have to be very careful not to give away a dandy student student who is basically transitioning or making some thought around transitioning. And so his gender expression changes week.

To week and also that that makes that student slightly awkward and the the students all you know, students will deliberately include the that student. They will deliberately, deliberately do that. But there's an there, the, the but there's an there's an A disease.

Around the lack of decision, I don't know what the disease is. The the lack of the lack of. It's hard to explain, but there's so I haven't seen it very often, but I think the the

student is going through some things and I think the students can feel that and they sort of give that student some distance some time. That's the only kind of I've seen it.

PB **Paul Bench** 44:08

Hmm.

Participant A 44:08

I don't think it's hateful and I don't think the student feels like they're being excluded. I don't think, but it's just, you know, some, some. Sometimes people are going through things that that are that are difficult and and that's the I've seen that once. I've never seen a student being bullied.

Other than there was an issue and there's a huge issue around an assault where two students had a fight, the fight was about a very serious incident and I wasn't entirely sure what was going, so I stayed out of it.

And so there was something around that. So occasionally there is a student who is ostracised the the process of the course makes that hopefully not as.

Problematic as it could be by forcing students to work together. But having said that, I don't know. You probably see this stuff where they say like I tended a couple of these things conflict resolution and and and I'm kind of like, well, what conflict, and maybe I'm oblivious to it, but.

Then there were a few examples given in the class and I was like, oh, I haven't seen that and I'm kind of curious about where this stuff happens. So or maybe I'm oblivious to it. Maybe, you know, maybe I don't see it for some reason. It's.

Is. I don't know if that's a good response or not. I I don't see it, but I but it doesn't mean it's not there.

PB **Paul Bench** 45:39

It's.

Was was this a conflict resolution related to like between two students in your your YOUR cohort?

Participant A 45:44

Yeah.

Yeah.

No, they were. So it's it's called nonviolent communication and they're offering it to

everyone, I think. And I've done the. Yeah. And I did. It's really actually an interesting course. I would do it if it's. If you see it, it's if you go into into, I Trent, you can see the nonviolent communication. And and I don't know why we were sent it. So it did make me wonder whether or not we'd had a particular problem in our department.

 **Paul Bench** 46:00

Oh.

Participant A 46:14

But I but not in my class like it hasn't happened. How to put this? There is one member of staff who we get along well, but it's very, very conservative and occasionally says something that I wouldn't advise.

 **Paul Bench** 46:18

Yeah.

Participant A 46:30

And and and that has had conflict, but it's usually the students going. I don't agree with you or you're wrong or you know whatever and and that.

Happy to hear that you know, so it's it's not a problem. I'll give you the example.

Don't repeat this because he'll know I know I won't say it. Then I won't say it. I won't say it, but it's just like he's mentioned a film and said the fat film would be better if it was done this way.

 **Paul Bench** 46:51

Maybe. Maybe don't.

Participant A 46:59

And and that was a little bit problematic and it was a an artistic decision, but it sounded, you know, against one of the non protective characteristics. So yeah. So it's like, yeah, so, you know, you know, so we have and we have that across the university, some disciplines.

 **Paul Bench** 47:08

Thanks.

Participant A 47:17

Are weirdly conservative. I worked a little bit in the fashion, doing some just sound sound for fashion at Royal College of Art, and I just like the fashion, can be quite conservative. And I, which doesn't sound right, but I was very surprised about some of the attitudes that I heard there.

So yeah, I don't know if that was just that department, but yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 47:40

Interesting. OK. Well, one final question and this is so we've talked about you as a practitioner or you have discussed your work as a practitioner and your experience the content.

And we've thought about like, queer students and their interactions with each other and with other students. But if it's OK with you, and if you feel comfortable to do so, I'd be interested to know what your memories.

Participant A 47:58

Mm-hmm.

PB **Paul Bench** 48:11

That relate to your identity, your gay identity. Although we know identities can change, but if you could reflect on your own experience of higher education in relation to.

Participant A 48:14

And.

Mm-hmm.

I.

Mm-hmm.

PB **Paul Bench** 48:26

Your queer identity or LGBTQ plus identity.

Participant A 48:32

Absolutely. You know, at times it was good and at times it was a **** show. I had a A

in the first year of university. You know, you're 18 years old. And I had a a, a language professor. He was a senior professor, for God's sake. And and we were talking about, I don't know, the class got started and he came in and he's writing stuff on the board and I don't know, maybe I was talking to somebody, but I don't think I was. And there's only it's like a like a labs. There's like 12 students in it and he and he looks at the class and he goes and he's going to get French Canadian accent.

But I won't imitate it. And he said Michael is afraid of girls.

PB **Paul Bench** 49:13

Wow.

Participant A 49:14

No problem, no problem. Like just you know, 1989 like, yeah, Michael is afraid of girls. And it was it was like that there was even. But then in the 2000s, we were supposed to go out and get some for a month. We're supposed to go out and get some work experience. So.

We'd met this sound designer worked and so and she was working on this on this horror film. So it was quite a well received horror film. I can't even remember what it was called, but she got me to do some work on it. It was really fun. We had a good time, but she happened to be trans and.

And and and so I go to the meeting at the end of the summer and they're asking me, what did you do always see this report? This looks good. And it's like, so who were you working with? And I say the person's name and my supervisor goes, oh, you'll remember her. She was that *****.

Yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 50:06

OK.

OK.

Participant A 50:08

So that was 2003. So so you know, so throughout education and that's partially why I think I'm the kind of teacher that I am, is that I, I refuse to, you know those kind of incidents. I mean that's just too so many things so many times that that.

PB **Paul Bench** 50:11

Hmm.

Participant A 50:28

Little things happen. Microaggressions really, really small things. And you know the university where it was at undergraduate university went to in Canada, was really quite open minded, really quite ahead of its time in a lot of ways. And there was also. So then when I did my first ma, I came here.

PB **Paul Bench** 50:30

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 50:47

And I was working. I switched into the last part of the part time and one of the one of the one of the student one head of department. She's a nice, nice person, but she had a lot of she was a psychoanalyst. She was and she wrote.

She knows it's a critic of art from the I spoke about this perspective and everything was on the table. And so she would regularly question things about when I talk about things being queer or or about sexuality, she'd regularly question whether or not it was true, IE was the thing really the thing that it was and.

My point was that it was a queer viewing and not that the thing was queer in itself, and her perspective seemed to be that by me saying that whatever was some like some like it hot, which is obviously queer. I mean, there's no other way you can read it, but really queer, something like that. Like it hot or or other films where it's like it's less obvious or where you just.

PB **Paul Bench** 51:29

Hmm.

Participant A 51:44

During a queer reading, and it's quite heterosexual. She objected to that. But her objection came through in a homophobic way. It's like, well, not everything's queer, not everything's gay. And I was like, well, it is for me every time I look at something, that's how I see it. That's how I see the world. I'm not looking at the world through

your eyes.

And you know, I I just don't see it like that. So it was like that, that thing of like a a queer, which we've lost to a certain extent in the meaning of the term queer that queer as a way of seeing and I and. And so the and. So unfortunately, we've lost that a little bit. I think we'd like, I'd like to go to return to that queer as a way of seeing.

 **Paul Bench** 52:13

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 52:22

But the but yeah, so throughout my higher education career, I think there's been microaggression, small things. And you don't know if you've been judged or not, you don't know. With my first MA because I was writing about queer theory. Anyway, it was a good thing they did this, but I'd use Gramsci as a backdrop when we talk about Gramsci, I love Gramsci.

And umm.

And the they sent it back to me and said it was fine if I if I went through with it, I would probably end up with AC type thing. And but if I went back and rewrote it from the point of view of Foucault, I would do better and so automatically. And I think a lot of theory has been forced into queer politics through that.

That lens that we we have to do, Foucault. We have to think of it that way and and but there are other perspectives and there's other ways to think about it. And unfortunately now there's enough writing about queer thinking that that there's other perspectives. But yeah. So I I think that was a kind of academic discrimination I don't.

No. Yeah.

 **Paul Bench** 53:21

So you. So you've discussed like your work and also tutors responses to you when you're in higher education, do you have any memory of your relationships and interactions? I you know, I don't mean romantic relationships necessarily.

Participant A 53:25

I.

Mm-hmm.

Yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 53:40

Relationships to and with and interactions with your Co students when you're in higher education.

Participant A 53:47

Yes, yeah, absolutely. My I have a lot and and it's so weird. 'cause, you're so scared. I came out. I guess when I was 19 or so did my friends and and my friend, my friend Jeff. And he's still friends and and.

And it was like, really weird. I was like, I was really emotional, and it's all this stuff.

And he goes, what's wrong? What the hell? And he goes. Oh, well, I think I'm gay.

And he goes. And he was his family were really open minded. They were from Lebanon. And they they were really open minded and he and he goes Oh my God, the only records you have is the Donna. Of course you're gay, you're gay.

And it was like, and you know, this is like, whatever it was 89 or something. And it was like it was like this moment of, like, you know, you know what, some people just don't care. And and and those are also the people you're looking for. So I you you find them that didn't mean that there weren't.

PB **Paul Bench** 54:26

Yes.

Participant A 54:45

People who were funny about it or whatever and but having said that, nobody ever said anything personal, but there were definitely people I didn't talk to a lot after that. And so I would say.

The students then were, you know, Canada's a different example. But, you know, people, even if they were homophobic, wouldn't say anything. It would be considered impolite. So the, you know, how the fellow students. OK, so I guess.

I could talk about. This is a weird thing. So fellow student and we were walking in the downtown area of the city in which we lived and my friend was was, so this is again 1990 and was love to wear makeup. Just love to wear makeup. That was his expression.

Still wears makeup, lives in New York, but is a man who wears makeup, not doesn't, you know, doesn't talk about non binary or trans or anything like that. Just a man who wears makeup and and we would get stopped by the cops on the street. And I say cops and that kind of you can tell my opinion. But they but they but they would. Slow down their police cars and they would say where are you 2 ***** going? And they would say stuff like that. And that was a university experience for me that it's why I decided to go around the world. You can't just not like that anymore. It would. But it still is. A few years ago there was a serial killer in Toronto and they and the police missed it because of.

 **Paul Bench** 56:03

Yeah.

Participant A 56:18

Phobia so they so so like I guess that's a university experience and it's something I I mentioned it to friends when we got back and they were all like that's a way just we should call the police station we should go down there and all because I'm like no I do not want this in my life and and so I'd say that was part of it so you.

 **Paul Bench** 56:33

Umm.

Participant A 56:38

Kind of as your your formative time having that and we see from the Met Police recently that they're even if they're not doing it publicly, they're still having that conversation privately as we see in the news. So that might be affecting our students in the way we speak to each other. I don't I you know. So I think it's related. It's related but as.

There was student interaction mostly OK in Canada in and then when I came here, everybody was quite out. There was an interesting thing where in my second MA, where we had, we were making a film and I was doing the sound.

And and it actually worked in my fingers so that everybody else in the group was straight. And I said, you know what? I reckon we can get Ian McAllen to do the voice over because a friend of mine in his house sitting for him and so so my my graduation film has Ian McAllen.

PB **Paul Bench** 57:27

I will.

That's incredible.

Participant A 57:31

To employ. So yeah, he was amazing. And I've worked recorded him a couple times since and he's absolutely amazing and so helpful to students. So then that that case, it was a benefit. I mean, you know, we couldn't have it, couldn't have been better. And so yeah, it's so I imagine that the diverse students probably see the value in the diversity these days.

I hope what I what I wouldn't want is for it to be is to 11 culture to overstep another one. I think for the students. But anyway. Yeah. So I I don't know how much homophobia I suffered or how much how many interacts were coloured by me being out, I don't know.

PB **Paul Bench** 58:11

It's it can be difficult to to throw your mind back as well, can't it?

Participant A 58:11

Listen.

Yeah, that's true. Yeah. Individual incidents. Yeah, we that it's good. Yeah. But in my in my year, there were two controversial figures. Very controversial figures. One of them was Rob Ford, who ended up being the mayor of Toronto.

And he dropped out and we, we we had a couple of arguments. We grew up in the same neighbourhoods. Also. I kind of didn't know him, but, you know, knew of him and whatever. And so that was kind of an interesting thing. And he wasn't he, you know, for example up till up till he was mayor 10 years ago, 15 years ago, every mayor had marched in a gay pride and he didn't March.

Marching a gay pride. So I think that was it. And the other person who was in my year at university was this guy called Gavin McGinnis. And he ended up starting Vice Magazine. But then he left. That got very upset and started another thing called the Proud Boys.

PB **Paul Bench** 58:57

And.

Participant A 59:11

So the guy who started VICE Magazine also started the proud boys and racist organisation, so it was quite a weird thing. So that kind of stuff, yes, like.

PB **Paul Bench** 59:18

Sorry I've made this organisation. I don't know. I don't know about.

Participant A 59:22

So there, yeah, it's got a great race through. So the guy who started VICE Magazine, the famous Vice magazine, also started a racist organisation called The Proud Boys, who most of whom were arrested on January 6th in the United States storming the Capitol building. And so, like, it was a weird time. It was.

PB **Paul Bench** 59:30

OK.

Mm-hmm.

Participant A 59:42

Weird time where people have these extreme views and I think we're still in that time and they react against it. However, did I experience any of that as much? No, not really. You know, we were aware of it, I guess, but in a personal level, no, it's always this macro stuff from us.

Died. So yeah, yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 1:00:02

OK. Interesting.

Participant A 1:00:07

Yeah.

You.

PB **Paul Bench** 1:00:12

Positive experience, perhaps.

Participant A 1:00:13

Yeah.

Yeah, I don't know that I'm remembering it right enough. Maybe I'm like, not. I mean, I know there's problems. It was not easy. Yeah, it couldn't be out everywhere. Couldn't be out everywhere. I certainly remember, you know.

PB **Paul Bench** 1:00:21

And.

Participant A 1:00:28

I don't know. I don't know how. If I'm misremembering it or not.

Yeah.

● **Paul Bench** stopped transcription