

Queer Hedge School 26th November 2020:

>> Rita: I never learn! I never learn. There we go, I'm unmuted. Look, what can I tell you, I'm going to have to get it tattooed on my hand, turn on the mic!

Sorry about the sound quality when we started, just fiddling around with the tech, but we're all good now. You're so very welcome to the fifty digs of the big old Queer Hedge School, dangerous ideas, and tonight we've got such an interesting session. It's all about queer kinship. But before we get into that I'll do a little bit of housekeeping.

If you look down at the bottom corner, there's a box that says cc, that's the captioning, please do turn it on, even if you don't need it, it's great to follow it along and our captioner this evening is Michelle again, who does just such a fabulous job.

You can talk to us all in the chat and I ask that you make sure the button in the chat is panellists and attendees so everyone can see what you're chatting about. We have one scholar rather than two scholars with us this evening, but that gave us a wonderful opportunity to bring in Thomas and Ellen and Fiachra, who are going to be talking in a little while.

And we have of course with us Kate Brennan Harding, the wonderful Kate Brennan Harding, our queer arts curator, and this evening our queer artist is Gemma Hutton who will join us in a wee while, because she has to put the child to bed!

So, the first thing I want to do is introduce you to Thomas, Ellen and Fiachra. The first thing we're going to do is run a video, two videos. The first is a really gorgeous piece from the archive that Paraic Kerrigan brought to us, it's our very own Arthur Lee being interviewed for RTE in 1979. And Arthur and his

partner are talking about queer kinship. Then we're going to go straight from that to a video that Thomas has made, and I'm in the going to tell you anything about it, I'm just going to let you watch it. Then when those videos run, Thomas, Fiachra and Ellen are going to talk to us about building queer kinship today. Looking at things like Grindr and that kind of good stuff.

So, without further ado, Sarah, will you run the videos. Did I say you're all very welcome in you're all very welcome!

Video: How long have you been together Art?

>> Five years, nearly five years.

>> Is it unusual to have a gay relationship that looks like being permanent?

>> I think in the sense ...

>> Rita: It looks like we've got a bit of tech bother going on with our videos, I'm sure Sarah will sort that out for us. Sarah, if that one's being difficult, you can stick Thomas's on in the meantime and we'll just do it backwards.

>> Video:

>> I think there are, in the sense of a formal relationship, I think that it is, yes, it is.

>> Why do you think that is?

>> Relationships are not reinforced by the society around, you are very much on your own and if you take -- again it goes back to the development of, because your sexual development is taking place in such an, I would say impoverished surrounding, that when you actually come to relate to somebody that you don't really have the capacity to do so. You may have it ideologically, but when it comes down to actually living and sharing with somebody, I think it becomes, it's more difficult.

>> I think also, most gay people explore their sexuality or their relationships in very furtive fashions, most gay people would only be gay a couple of nights a week or something like that, you know? They can't tie it into their work or their family or the community that they're living in, you know? So, most relationships between gays are for a couple of hours, like friends they go and have a drink with, you know? Then they go back and they live a hidden life, in terms of themselves, they live a straight front life. And so, there's no possibility of a relationship developing, most of them wouldn't be game to set up a situation to encompass both of them in a living situation. Most gays are living at home or living with straight friends, they are working, living as straight people for 99 percent of their life.

>> Has it been difficult to maintain this relationship?

>> Yes, there's been lots of -- there's lots of conflict inside yourself. From not having related to people very closely myself when I was younger, to start relating to another person with their own complexities, their own identity, and again myself. And at the same time exploring -- like your own needs and trying to accommodate another person's needs and things like that, without the society around you giving you any feedback. You don't see other gay couples, you don't see other gays relating to each other, society is not accommodating gays at all, you have to make it in an isolated way. So, in the sense of that, you've got to accommodate a lot of frustrations.

>> There's no sense of, you don't get a sense of identity from society.

(video:)

>> How are you getting on? Are you top or bottom or what ...?

>> Rita: And we're going to go straight over to Fiachra, Ellen and Thomas. Fiachra, would you like to take it away?

>> Fiachra: Thanks very much Rita. And hi to everyone. And watching the videos there, I don't think Arthur has changed that much in all that length of time

and we're sending him all our love this evening, I hope he's watching.

So, I'm delighted to have this opportunity to chat with Thomas and with Ellen this evening, and thanks so much for the video Thomas. And Ellen, I'm looking forward to hearing from you in a minute, if you want to do some creative video live, you're free to do that as well.

But I suppose Thomas, I was really interested watching the video there with Arthur and Laurie and then it's in contrast in lots of ways to your video there and I suppose, but it is all around gay love, and I was wondering how do you think queer kinship looks today? And what are the comparisons and the differences between Arthur and Laurie's video and your video with Anthony?

>> Thomas: Thanks, so the video, basically I didn't make it in the sense of contrasting it to Arthur and Laurie's talk there, but kind of setting them up against each other, because there is 40 years between them in that sense. So even when Laurie was saying in the video in that sense, you don't get a sense of identity from society as well. In the same way you don't get a sense of queer kinship from society, so in the way that we have to establish that ourselves.

Now have we done that 40 years after that? Maybe, maybe not. I don't know. But I want to look, I wanted also to point out a particular part of queer kinship and the queer culture that we have that I kind of call Grindr culture myself specifically and it relates to so much that we've talked about over the last weeks, which is Cormac addressing homonormativity along with discourse, how we talk about the way that queers effectively are, you know, trying to stage ourselves in society and how to normalise ourselves as well.

And also, the lesson learned from that is that not every individual wants what -- it's a kind of, not enforcing what we individually want on others, in that sense. So, some want long term relationships some just want many sexual partners. But also what Steven highlighted last week, that in his story he was

out with this guy George who was then, they were discussing how Ireland turned into a better place, but at the same time Steven was -- Steven's boy toy you might say, George I just want to go and get bum fucked in Phoenix Park while Stephen was congratulating saying Ireland has come so far.

Also, what Paraic was talking about the media spheres and spaces that we access and are regulated by media hosts, media producers, also how we are regulating these spaces through the content. So, I kind of wanted to talk about the queer, Grindr culture because it does provide opportunities, but after all this time it does also provide limitations also in a way that we react.

Now my lived experience what I'm talking about here is a gay man's experience, meeting in a rural area, with different expectations and meeting with different ideas of kinship maybe even and then maybe being disappointed about that. But also looking at how do these guys meet up? It's through this app. Why is it that we're not getting this kind of, the Grindr culture establishes queer kinships that are conflicting, what I mean by that is a point that addresses what the other scholars have been talking about, that is that Grindr is an app, what is an app? A product, effectively something that is supposed to generate sustainable revenue for a company. So, it has another purpose than serving itself as a queer space, it is something that's meant to make money.

So, the first-hand objective of an app is not to make sure that the queer participants of that space are safe, or that they are well maintained, it's that they are using this space for whatever purposes, it doesn't care what purposes. And this specially surfaced in the pandemic.

Now I haven't used Grindr about a year or anything like that but during the pandemic I heard my friends that used it, it's a very frustrating space to be on because of the way interactions are set. Because it's not a place for deep seated kinships as well.

So, in that sense, I'm not talking about finding a partner for life, I'm talking about establishing, having a diversity of kinships in that sense, different kinds of kinships it doesn't allow for that diversity.

So, it highlights a problem, that is that we probably need kinship spaces, spaces where kinships can foster, digital or physical. Think community spaces such as The Gay Project of course we'll talk about that, and this, what we're doing here allows for spaces for kinships to form. One of the attendees last week said you're like a queer family to me. I think that's a really good way of saying that we need to keep on doing these spaces in that sense.

>> Fiachra: In the run-up to this evening I was reminded of an article I read by Judith Stacey from the US in 2004 where she actually wrote an article called cruising to family land, and talked about how this thurple became a thurple through cruising initially but then became a family of choice and a community of choice.

Another example in her study was a Les-bi gay family, co-parenting family who never had to employ a babysitter because of the community of kinship that they had around them, developed from their family of choice through the queer community. And I just think that -- I was thinking of how queer families, queer communities, queer kinship can expand the notion of kinship and I suppose I might come back to you later Thomas about another question that I have for you.

But I was wondering if I could Ellen, around that, about expanding repertoire, the kinship repertoire, maybe you might talk to your experience and talk about where is -- whereby Bi folk within our queer kinship

>> Ellen: Yeah thank you so much for having me, I'm really excited to be here and it's great to talk while not being in the chat box. I suppose what I found really interesting about your piece Thomas was this idea of discretion, and that whole, you have to travel so far away before you can be yourself. Because I

think the first time that I explored the idea of having different partners, other than just Sis male partners was when I moved to Manchester, and it was the first time that I was like, my God I have the opportunity to do this, when it was always just speculating.

For context, I live in Limerick and we don't have any queer spaces at all. But I suppose in terms of expanding queer kinship, I'm always interested in the idea of the logical family as oppose the biological family, because I think that for queer people, we've never had -- we have never been able to depend on heteronormative culture, we've always had to make it ourselves, and I'm really interested in conversations that people like dean spade have been having for years and years about mutual aid and how mutual aid can be a source of queer kinship.

There's some great funds started in Ireland, particularly in the trans community for trans harm reduction and small trans library, which if you have any spare coin you should definitely support them if you can. But that was always, it was DIY culture making a family of people and helping and supporting each other, and I always go back to that phrase from queer nation, about an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us. It's about everyone together, it's not necessarily a nuclear family.

And we're kind of fed this lie that if we, I think Cormac talked about it a lot when he spoke about homonormativity in the earlier weeks, about oh if we just have marriage rights and if we just have X, Y and Z everything will be fine. But in reality, the people that have supported me the most are the people that I've met out clubbing or that I've met in support groups that we have made ad hoc for different reasons. But I think that's been the strongest bonds that I have had, not necessarily in the romantic relationships, that there's always going to be a family that will be located within those queer spaces. But I am worried, and I think Thomas touched on it a bit, about this whole idea of capitalism and

commodifying those queer spaces, because then it's like poorer queer folks don't have a chance to get into those spaces and to meet people. Which is why I'm super into ideas of mutual aid and very interested in creating those spaces ourselves, rather than letting X, Y and Z create them with monetary gain in mind.

>> Fiachra: I think that going back to, something that struck me at the start of Arthur and Laurie's interview was this positioning of the length of the relationship that Arthur and Laurie had equated with the quality of the relationship, and that kinship, that suddenly that they were together five years gave them validity, it goes back to those notions of respectability and the acceptable queer in society. And I think the issue that you mentioned there Ellen, I suppose around mutual aid and solidarity, and really resonates with me, because it's something that I often talk about around the need for solidarity, and how our rights have been supported or our community has been supported by people outside of the community, and within the community and communities.

But also, that we can sometimes not show support within the community, and so I suppose just going back to you Thomas, I suppose -- I know you have a mixed background, Zambia, Denmark and you've lived in Ireland now for a while. So, from your experience how does queer kinship manifest and how can they be applied here and elsewhere?

>> Thomas: Yeah just a bit of, you can kind of say I'm a Mongrel in that sense a little north and south. My mother's from Zambia, I was there many times while growing up in Denmark, maybe too many times I've contributed to the bank of CO 2 in the atmosphere.

So, I finished my masters in African studies two years ago where I explored also in its homosexuality as it is not performed but how you access structures, where you can find spaces for queers. Primarily gay men in Zambia, I also had the pleasure of having personal experience of dating gay men down in Zambia as well. It's not an easy life, it's 14 years in prison, socially it's reflected in society,

in media, in politics, in religious spheres, that it's simply not okay to be gay.

So obviously it's kind of brings a perspective that it is also -- kind of a spatial and temporal dyke, so you have in Denmark homosexuality was decriminalised in 1930, Ireland 1993 and Zambia somewhere in the future. We can learn a lot of things, I haven't lived that long how it was to know in Ireland and Denmark during the time when Arthur and Laurie were talking, I can at least say in Zambia it's interesting to observe how kinships are formed in a space that is extremely queer unfriendly, you know, where queer kinships are so difficult to establish just in general.

And then -- it's funny how, I think this is something that maybe older Irish people can relate with. You have to find the cracks and crevices where the kinships can then manifest. We become really good at doing it, there was something The Gay Project put up a picture of, a set of images of gay men through time who have established different kinds of relationships, 120 years ago, how they've established their love, but of course in societies where it was not accepted.

And we can still of course draw on those challenges even today where we legislatively have been given a lot of rights. But there's not really an answer to it from my side other than the communities that we have are today in modern, North-western Europe, the best chance we have of establishing kinships, in my view.

>> Fiachra: I think I've run out of time, but if I could squeeze in two more minutes, to go back to Ellen, just to say Ellen, I suppose using those words cracks and crevices, where are the cracks and crevices for bi folk in our queer kinship spaces, do you think?

>> Ellen: This is interesting, because I'm doing research on bisexuality in Ireland for my Ph.D. and the research that is available currently says that people kind of orient themselves in different ways depending on the gender of their

partner. So you end up being say, like I am, I identify as nonbinary so I have, but in the past when I did identify as a woman when I was with women I would act "More gay" if I was with a Sis man I would act "More straight" now thankfully I am in a position where I have a lovely Sis partner and he is very accommodating towards me, but I think it's quite difficult for bisexual people to kind of orient themselves in different ways because we do think of everything in such binary matters, that you try and fit yourself in, dependent on what makes you feel comfortable, and I think that there's a really interesting study that was done in the 80s actually by bisexual women who put themselves in lesbian communities and they were so terrified to disclose their bisexual identity in case they would be excommunicated, and the same thing has happened in recent studies in Italy where it's come out, if you are bisexual you probably shouldn't disclose that identity.

So, it ends up being a case where I think this is what is so attractive to bisexual people, is identifying as queer, because it means that you don't have to depend on the binary and it means that you don't have to depend on any specific culture. Am I gay enough, am I lesbian enough, am I X enough, you know? There is still this kind of Catch 22 situation where bi people are considered too queer or not queer enough. So, where there's a space for bi people in Ireland, I'm not quite sure.

I think that for me anyway the most accepting places have always been in activist projects where merge, people like reaction Ireland, those groups like that, that it's not necessarily focused on a specific peer group, but we all acknowledge our similar struggles and things like that within that.

So, I think it goes back to what you said already Fiachra about solidarity, and I totally agree in establishing queer spaces and queer kinships but we need to find other ways than relying just on identity if that makes sense.

>> Fiachra: Thank you both very much, I have gone five minutes over, I am

going to hang my head in shame and hand you back to Rita and say I am very sorry, but it was so interesting I could have talked to you all night. So, I'm going to mute myself fairly quickly and say thank you to both of you.

>> Rita: Thank you Fiachra, I know it's so hard. Everybody is just so interesting. And what I forgot to do, really, I'm completely upside down this evening but sure look! I forgot to introduce you to Fiachra!

So Fiachra really, is one of our board members at The Gay Project and is a lecturer in applied sociology is that right Fiachra?

>> Fiachra: Yeah in UCC

>> Rita: And I didn't introduce you to Ellen properly either. And you all know Thomas, but Ellen is doing a Ph.D. at the minute, queer kinship is part of that and Ellen will be presenting on the 17th as part of our fandom stuff, because one of Ellen's specialist fields is that when thing, fandom, she's going to talk a little about Harry potter and JK Rowling and also about her very own specialist love which is Morrissey, and how do we deal with Morrissey these days really? So, Ellen will be back with us on the 17th talking about all that good stuff.

But now that I've made up for my bad manners and not introducing people properly. I am going to give you to our fabulous queer arts correspondent Kate Brennan Harding who will no doubt do a wonderful interview and introduction because she's far better at this than I am. Kate over to you.

>> Kate: Hello everybody, Rita thank you for that introduction although there's currently some banging going on in the background, it's my stepson talking of kinship, if you hear that he's going to bed, we're rolling with the punches!

Lovely to be back, I had to miss last week because I had a death in my family and it was just, that's the way obviously things go, but thank you everybody forgiving me the space to be able to separate and go away and come back.

Now Break for Art is back for me, I missed last week and I'm so glad that Stefan

was on last week because I love him, but I also love this next person that I am about to introduce. I first saw them as part of outburst in 2018, being Dick van Dyke, being amazing as part of Queertopia, and Queertopia is a troupe of amazing activist performers full of glitter and possibly one of the queerest and best things I've seen in Ireland ever, I think they're amazing.

So, my next guest is Gemma who has also just I believe been putting a child to bed, Gemma how are you?

>> Gemma: That's us, we're just being busy people with kids. Not what I thought we would ever talk about.

>> Kate: Talk about kinship, we're literally living it now in a different way. Gemma, we're going to be showing an excerpt from your amazing play that you are in the middle of, well a show you are in the middle of, I suppose preparing and Covid put the kybosh on a lot of that hasn't it? But you showed it three times as part of outburst at the weekend, how did that go?

>> Gemma: Mm-hmm! I'm a very interactive performer, so when Covid came I had it in the back of my mind that I needed to think that this could be a possibility, that it could be filmed without an audience, it's still hard to write that way with the balance between the two and the inevitable happened, we got locked down the day that I was meant to do my show.

Normally you would get three live performances to engage with an audience and get feedback, I didn't get that. So I literally just went straight into filming, so I kind of threw everything into the online show that premiered for outburst and from there I've been collating feedback and it will be sculpted into a shorter piece that can go to festivals, it's about an hour and 20 minutes at the minute I'm hoping to get it down to an hour.

>> Kate: The show is called I'm mother, and the concept came to you because, well you are now a mother. But it developed hugely, do you want to talk to us about how it developed and tell everybody a bit about what it's about before we go into the excerpt.

>> Gemma: Sure, very quickly, I had an idea about two or three years ago, called heteronormative and I wanted to discuss how I was coming to terms with coming out as a lesbian, a bisexual then a lesbian, then queer, kind of popped up into my language and my vocabulary, it's really coming to terms with the fact that I feel almost like queer people are cheated from coming through their formative years with the identity that they finally come to.

I know queer is always evolving and changing and means many different things to different people but for me it was a summary of how my sexuality and gender felt, queer was the perfect word but I didn't have it growing up, we're not thought about that, it was nothing but a slur. So I started talking about being brought up in a heteronormative construction and that showed because now I'm a mother evolved to analysing my relationship with my mother, who was an alcoholic, who I ended up mothering and becoming her carer, and it's about relationship of having my experience of being a mother queered and then being a queer mother, how I learned the skills, translated them and evolved them.

Also, the fact that I come from very working-class roots and how I connect working class so tightly with queer community, which I talk a little bit more about the lack of shame being a currency in queer and working-class communities, there is no shame in being poor. There is no shame in being other, as long as you are loyal and look after each other. I really found that actually when I was running around working-class estates that's where I fell in love with the idea that you can create your own tribe. Then when I moved to Belfast that I learned that queer was my tribe.

So, it's just about that journey that I went on, but also there's a lot about Peppa Pig in there as well.

>> Kate: Yes, there is. For the parts that I have seen, I haven't seen the whole show yet. It's very funny, you're very real, it is that thing of, is it your most personal work to date?

>> Gemma: Absolutely. This last year writing this show has essentially been therapy and very much releasing myself from all the shame and guilt that I have from experiences and that sort of feeling that you have when you have an alcoholic parent, it's like a middle-class town, Bangor and people knew who my mother was. I went to a grammar school of all girls, there is no boundaries for people and bullies, and it took me to now really to work through that shame and guilt and how we repeat cycles of shame and guilt that we are brought up with, with constantly being told by my aunties and my mum, don't like men, hate men, be a Nun, all men are bad. I actively have had to work through be programming myself because I don't want to pass that trauma on to Frankie my daughter, I want to give her a skill set rather than teacher everything is bad, I want to give her the tools to learn that and know.

That's been a lot, I pretty much put everything out there, but it's been very cathartic and wonderful and the response I've had from people reaching out to me who told me similar stories who said it's so good to have a connection, has just already, it's all been worth it now really.

>> Kate: It's that relatability that people are craving and people like us, who have grown-up where we've grown up in a heteronormative environment, nearly everybody has, and it's not living in the shadows, but it's living separately and when somebody stands up and says something and shares a story that's similar to yours, the relatability is worth tenfold.

I think because obviously we're putting Frankie to bed, you missed at the start there was a video, that was an interview done with Arthur and Laurie.

>> Gemma: No, I saw it.

>> Kate: Okay good, it's just touching on the subject, it was amazing to see it and so eloquent and beautiful, but at the same time you're looking at something that's 40 years old, but you can still see how it's videoed and framed, the unsaid is done in shame and it's done in taboo and it's like we have come a long way, but we still have that shadow lurking around us, or I think we do. What do you

think? Because there's marginal differences in Northern Ireland as well in terms of, there's definitely I think Queertopia opened my eyes up to the level of oppression felt by people living in Northern Ireland.

>> Gemma: Yeah there's still a long way to go. I think the difference between now and 40 years ago is marketing and capitalism.

>> Kate: Completely.

>> Gemma: That's it, you can slap a rainbow Smirnoff vodka bottle on to things and all of a sudden you accept people, but actually if you went in and poked that shop or business that have a rainbow outside the shop, would they be okay calling me mama and my partner mummy for Frankie? Or would they, then ever a kid says where's your daddy to Frankie, would they let me have that space to talk or would they tell me that it's bad to talk about sex -- maybe not in a business, but in that kind of context of actually if you scrape very, very little off the surface it is exactly the same conversations that we had 40 years ago.

>> Kate: Completely, it's like a veneer of rainbow to make everything nice and pretty, but as long as we play by the same rules instead of playing by the rules, we went to invent by ourselves.

Listen I'm going to an excerpt would you introduce what we are about to see.

>> Gemma: This is me having a slight break down in a small room with a camera, about being in lockdown with a small human and how that connected to flash backs of my childhood and how I actually tried to fight with my identity and how it tied in with fashion as well, it was a bit of a conbobulation of little elements in this ten minutes

>> Kate: Brilliant we'll be back with you as soon as the video is done.

Video:

So lockdown has been tough on everyone, it's been challenging at times, I try to look on the upside of things because at the start of this back in March we were all like you know what, let's get our DIY done, let's get the carpets lifted, let's

change the colour of that wall, let's really bond and nurture our children ... well that was nice for about I'd say a month, Max. And now I hate every, every F-ing wall in my house, despite redecorating them three times!

And I love my child, but she is two years old and I think someone is pranking me with the shit that comes out of her mouth, all right? I think if I ever did believe in hauntings, there is some form of poltergeist whispering bullshit into her ear to gas light me.

Somebody thought it was a good idea to have a Peppa Pig channel, so that's on for approximately 13 hours a day ... and Peppa's an asshole for anyone that doesn't have kids, this is a pig that is an actual ass hole. She's a brat and that's my child's favourite mentor at the minute which is great. We're negotiating on food, I'd like to make a formal apology -- so I was one of them Dick heads, those foolish, childless arse holes that used to say whenever I didn't have kids that when I did have them, they would eat exactly what was put in front of them, they'd eat nutritious food, wouldn't have any of the bad habits I had. I'm so sorry if I ever said that to you.

Karma has truly bitten me on the ass. My child literally think that is McDonalds is some sort of religious food and must have it at least three times a week. I know that sounds horrific, but sometimes the drive through is the quietest moment of the day whenever she knows that she's about to get chicken nuggets fired into her mouth and I'm all right with that!

We're also negotiating about -- I can't believe I'm saying this -- style! Fashion. With my two-year-old. It is a constant negotiation, I imagine what goes on in my child's bedroom is a bit like what's going on in Stormont at the minute with the five parties, you know? See whenever Peppa and paw patrol get involved that's when I have to step out of the room. Things get heated. But yeah, we're trying to work out and negotiated whether Frankie today wants to wear a dress,

tracksuit or as the other day she absolutely insisted on just wearing two different pyjamas together with her wellie boots ... I don't know why. I'm not saying that I am Anna Wintour or anything, not really on the cutting edge of fashion, but that was scundering going around Tesco's I'm surprised someone didn't call social services on me, whilst just throwing chicken nuggets into her mouth like at a zoo, yeah that's where I'm at.

And the thing about fashion is I don't really have any clue about it, certainly don't have a clue about little girl's fashion. Now I'm 36 now, so give you a bit of background on me, I'm from a place called Bangor, a little town outside Belfast, thinks it is something because it has a lot of vowels in its name, but it's not! And I was born in 1984, so I was the generation that used to run around the playground putting the coats tied around our necks pretending we were thunder cats, I was always Lion hope. We had Pogs, we used to circle things in the Argos catalogue for Santa, I used to start in February because I liked to be ahead of the trend. There was a big rivalry, a bit like Biden and Trump, against Index and Argos. It was odd, I don't know why we all got embroiled in the catalogue wars but that was it at the time, panicking having the Index catalogue and Argos, just in case Santa chose a different approach one year.

I had a selection of shell suits, let's just go back memory lane and remember the sexy thing that was shell suits. Let's have a few images ... hope that didn't trigger anybody, maybe I should have put trigger warning there sorry about that. But yes, I had a large selection of shell suits everybody had a large selection of shell suits. This is also the generation that Fruit of the Loom was Calvin Kline for us, you know what I mean, that was as close to a label as we got.

But we had to turn our shell suits inside out whenever we used to throw birthday parties in Indiana Land or Jungle Jim's because there was that story about the child that didn't turn their shell suit inside out and got electrocuted to death going down and never found their body in the ball pit but I know that's true because it

was my mate's mate's cousin, they never found her, just stuck in the ball pit, gone.

So that's what I was brought up with, you know what I mean? We used to get exclamation and Charlie in our stockings and we thought we were very fucking posh for having those, you know what I mean? And we used to have the roller ball of glitter, strawberry scented glitter that probably caused several layers of skin to melt off our faces due to chemicals, but we thought we were the bee's knees, we all thought we were be witched probably if I think back.

But that's what I was brought up with. The thing with Frankie is that with the notions, there's a lot more options now for kids as well, there's no shell suit sad lie, I would like to bring them back, but whatever. But I had to take Frankie ... (siren) that's the fashion police there, they heard about the shell suit I'd say! I had to take Frankie shopping for clothes a couple of weeks ago at Halloween, because small humans grow very fast, raging about it!

And after we had about a 10 to 15-minute melt down literally at the entrance of Asda, glass doors and everything, so full audience, her lying on the floor, pretending to be bed and bubbling at the lips, explaining to me why she needed -- needed -- the Peppa Pig princess play house before Santa brought it.

I then just lifted her by the arse of her tracksuit and put her inside a trolley, I didn't put her into the wee seat, I put her inside the trolley, not great parenting, I'm not proud of it but this is where I'm at lads. Then she was delighted with herself, she felt like a Goonie or something in the trolley.

But we went to the kids' section, honestly, I now know what a dad feels like out of his depth right? So, we get into the section, and I'm like do we need two pieces, there's two pieces here, do we need the Disney range, jeans, plain track suits, what are we doing here? So, went around with her, listened to her,

negotiated with her, she's the one that's going to wear them, if she wants to look like ... that, then that's fine. I nodded politely to a two-year-old. Nodded politely to a two-year-old! That's how scared I am of another melt down in the trolley!

As we put jeans and two-piece poppy troll world tour tracksuits with stupid wee frills here, she was delighted about, that's fine, mini mouse things and all of them had pink and sequins and stuff, that's fine. Then I just had a moment as she was playing with her Elsa light up wellie boots, was I being -- was I feeding into gender conformity? Was I being a shit queer? Was I being a shit queer here? F sake, bad enough thinking you're being a shit parent fucking your kid into a trolley now I was a shit queer on top of all of that.

I was stood in the middle of Asda having an existential crisis, listening to Simone de Beauvoir whisper into my ear going "you're shit" -- sorry, she's French (then in a faux-French accent) "you're shit". Just having a melt down and then I snapped out of it whenever I heard mama, I need nuggets, because obviously I can respect that. Food! And realised that I had been standing in the middle of the aisles between the boy and girl section of Asda with a pair of batwing ears on my head that she had put on my head and I didn't realise I was wearing, people walking past me, with a caged child, holding wellie boots, in the middle of Asda with me thinking I was Batgirl.

So that happened, I felt a bit better because when we went past the boys' section, she chose a dinosaur t-shirt because she wanted to scare mummy with it, so I didn't feel so bad then.

Thank you for everything you do, for all the activists out there, all the parents out there struggling, I think it's totally okay. Let's not worry about the memes and mantra and yoga to centre yourself in the morning, just go and have a glass of wine if that's what you need to do. Look after yourself, I can't wait till we get

to have a live audience and do this in person. Take care.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Kate: Brilliant Gemma.

>> Gemma: Thank you.

>> Kate: It's so nice to actually just have a little laugh as well, that's the wonderful thing of just talking about ourselves and our identity and then you putting that out there, I can't wait to see the full show.

In terms of standing in the middle of Tesco or Asda and looking at the gendering of clothes and trying to get it right, where are you at with it now?

>> Gemma: I'm just taking her lead. I think it's working, because you know what, it's hard enough being a parent, and if you don't have a structure behind you -- so kinship, family however you describe it, my father lives in Bangor but he couldn't look after Frankie, my mum has since passed and my partner's parents have passed. We're literally winging it.

How did people live without Google? To be fair, I'm googling how to make a child poo at 1 am, I don't know how they did it in the 80s, but that kind of thing of matriarchy passing things down to each other, whether it's right or wrong, it creates a sense of connection, and we don't really have that.

I was taught, when I was three years old I had to wear frilly dresses and bows in my hair, because it was ridiculous I was running around in my boy shorts, topless making mud pies, my grandparents were having aneurysms because they didn't want to take me around like that, like Stig of the Dump, but my mum put me into dresses when we were going to see my grandparents, I don't want that for her. I don't want that when she goes to see granddad or certain people, she has to perform genders for others. I know that's deep for a two-year-old but I remember crying in my birthday dress. I know people think you'll forget it, but hindsight is a wonderful thing, people realise those points could be significant if

that person is queer, because they don't have that education, so at the minute I am just winging it, like sometimes she sits and plays with her paw patrol cars, sometimes she sits and plays with her Disney princesses and knocks them off a cliff, it's very dramatic. Sometimes she wears trackies, sometimes a wee leather jacket to be like mama which is very cute. So, I think the important thing is that we talk to her, we don't just go buy the clothes and put them on her, which is how I was brought up.

So, there is an engagement there to an extent, there's obviously boundaries but there is engagement with her about it and what she's comfy wearing.

>> Kate: I know obviously, I can only speak on my own experience, myself as a child, my mum -- now my mom was very open but she wouldn't let me cut my hair, my hair is such a part of my identity that I had long hair down past my bum until I was over 18, but I used to tie it up and put it into a baseball cap and if somebody mistook me for a boy I was walking on cloud 9, just delighted. I wanted to be Elvis all of those things around your identity, I didn't know that it was wrong, but I knew that it was odd, as in other people, all my friend didn't want to be the opposite of what they were told they were. And it's like my aversion of frills and dresses and pink was mainly I think about kicking against being told what I had to do, but also being told what little girls were supposed to be like.

Like little girls were not to play football when I was growing up, little girls were to do ballet. And if boys got to do something that I wanted to do then I wanted to identify with them, because they got to do the things I wanted to do. So nowadays, and like I'm a stepparent now and it's fascinating, wonderful to watch how you take the child's lead and how he wants different things, he wants Barbie and he wants trucks. And it's my gendering of things that's the problem, I'm still stuck on that gendering of stuff, I think so many of us are.

>> Gemma: You start to panic and people are going to go oh she's made them gay! You know, because I can do that. I have this power that nobody else has.

To make people gay. Yeah, that's the thing. And the thing is there's an extra lens on you when you are a queer parent, because they are waiting for you to fuck it up. So, they can go, see, you need a mum and dad.

>> Kate: Yeah, it's completely -- and then there's also the fact that queer families so often contain more than just two parents, you know what I mean? So, it's about broadening what our assumptions are of kinship in families.

I'm running out of time now, but you because you are a parent now, did your queerness change when you became a mother?

>> Gemma: Well again what I talk about in the show, my pro priorities and roles changed. I have been known as heavily involved in Queertopia and activism and I still am. But when you're a queer activist as well it's like good by self-care you no longer need it, so I had to actively sit myself down and go you are no use to anybody before having a child if you didn't look after yourself, you're certainly not going to be any use to anybody after it.

So really just taking a step back and also making people own it, so I think sometimes when you're very strong personality, like myself and I know that, you tend to charge forward and go it's okay, I've got it, I'll do it. Now I have a child I can't do that. So also it's about trying to now bring the queer community together and create more accountable, if people wants things to change we as a community must do it and not hide behind one single voice, but we also know not everybody's a public speaker so that's again another way we have to work out how people can be activists without having to be at the fore front of things, how we can show you can change things without necessarily having a microphone.

So, we've got the 343 space up in Belfast now that I'm the chairperson of, a queer feminist space. So, we allow people to use the space to record things, make podcasts, voice recordings, poetry, perform, anything. We have a radio station where we can do interviews and people can engage through doing

community interviews or sharing information. So, I think my role has changed, where I'm still as active as I was, but it's about me making space and enabling other people to take up the activist roles as well.

>> Kate: You're inspirational. I just want to read you out a few things. From heather you are a breath of fresh air, hilarious as always thank you. Loved that thank you. I missed it. Great to see some of the show in here. Amazing Gemma loved it. Love this had shown last week, can't wait for the live version, that's Siobhan. That was brilliant Gemma can't wait to be part of the live audience.

So, Gemma thank you so much for being part of dangerous ideas in the Queer Hedge School. Anybody participating and enjoying the show, we have a donor box in the chat box, and if you would like to donate to the Break for Art please do so at your leisure but in the next probably half an hour. I'm going to hand back to Rita, thank you very much.

>> Rita: Thank you so much for, again yet another amazing piece of queer art, particularly lovely for me to have another Nordie in the room! It's always lovely to hear the gentle dull set tones of the good Bangor accent. Gemma thanks a million for being part of this, I was laughing out loud as we went along, that was really funny, good stuff.

So, and yes please do find the link, maybe Ailsa could stick the donor box link in the chat again. As you know we are doing a pass the bucket for the queer artists, so when this is all done, we'll divide up between them everything you threw in the bucket. So please do, you've been enormously generous so far, if any of you haven't thrown the Bobs in yet, work away.

So now that brings me to the gorgeous and much better lit Paraic Kerrigan, Paraic was with us last week and it was absolutely fascinating stuff, we were looking at social media and how social media facilitates us, but also creates us and limits us. We could talk about that Paraic for another two weeks.

But this week, we may dip in and out of that, but this week we're going to talk about your more current research that you're working on now, that particularly ties into queer kinship, and Paraic and I have had some really interesting conversations -- I have the best craic talking to the scholars before we ever do this, to kind of get an idea of what we're going to be talking about.

The thing that really struck me when we were having our conversation, and Ellen used the term earlier, logical versus biological. I'd not heard it put like that before and it was you yesterday actually, when we were talking yesterday, that you said it, talk to us a bit about this logical versus biological family Paraic.

>> Paraic: Sure, all of us in the room and here with us tonight can realise that we all as queer people have had moments where you realise that you're on the periphery of things, you fall between the cracks and fissures of society and albeit that your family might be accepting and your family might be loving and all encompassing, there are circumstances where families are not that case. We as queers, as we, as Cedric theorized in the fact that the closet is a shaping aspect in our lives, thus finding our family and our tribe is part of that experience, part of that coming out experience, that we negotiate and renegotiate constantly throughout our lives.

We yesterday Rita were talking about the whole notion of energy and queer energy, and somehow the queers gravitate towards each other like magnets, we spoke of experience in school where friends we were five or six with, yet the whole group of people ends up being gay, we find ways of just reaching out to each other and finding each other, but as we come out, back to the original point, we seek people that are part of us and part of our family and the historical research speaks to these notions, and while the term family has certain disagreements academically, the LGBTQ community has reached out, the question "Is she family" has long been asked by gays and lesbians to determine if an individual identifies as a member of that community.

George Chauncey wrote *Gay New York*, a really important history about early 20th century New York City for queers. He noted in that, that at least as early as the 1920s the term used for close friends within the gay community was sister, and for the older mentors was auntie. So even historically we have used all of these different kinds of terms, vernacular to embolden and create a sense of family.

But why we do this is because it is our logical family and it speaks to these notions of kinship. That queers don't necessarily align with the homonormative, assimilative ideals of heteronormativity. We have that benefit and Stefan and Cormac said it last week and Ellen said it earlier in her piece, we don't have the societal obligations as a result of being queer, so we don't necessarily have to get married, we don't have to follow the what's referred to, the chrono-normative temporality, we as queers can create our own time lines on how we can live our lives, we as queers can reassert our own time lines.

That in itself, queer temporality is different, we operate in different queer spaces, we can frame and create families that can accommodate the lives and the existences that we want to have, in co-existing in particular kinds of spaces.

On that note one of the most prominent academics who has coined even the term "families we chose" is anthropologist Kath Weston, she studied lesbian and gay logical families in the San Francisco Bay Area where she conducted fieldwork amongst 80 participants, she found the majority of gay and lesbian individuals fostered the notions of kinship by having houses for example, so you might have watched where you have *House Eleganza* and you can see the idea of kinship being popularised in mainstream media outlets and queer media outlets.

Those were institutions and societal spaces and sites where people could form and create a family space. So, there's this huge historical significance for it, I

think all of us as queers can identify with trying to find and forge our logical family, that in a lot of instances where we've experienced rejection and what not from other aspects of society, we can at least find acceptance amongst each other.

I see a question there what was the name of the anthropologist? Kath Weston, *Families We Chose*, 1991. I'll share that as a recommended reading with everyone afterwards

>> Rita: Yes, there's something there, I've written down queer temporality, that's lovely, we'll come back to that. So, this notion of logical, one of the things that I would be very concerned about as an older queer, I'm concerned that younger queers are not getting the same opportunities to build queer kinship, and I understand that perhaps as being a direct result of rampant capitalism and the commodification of spaces, is there any research on this Paraic? Is there any -- you know, we saw 40 years ago in Ireland in Cork queer kinship, and Arthur and Laurie were talking about that and they were talking about how their families of origins might reject them, how we have to create our own families. And we all know that, everybody in this room knows that, that we do find our queers and make our connections, but is it harder today or do I just imagine that?

>> Paraic: Is it harder today? I don't think so. Having looked at queer Irish history there's been particular epochs one might say of the past 40 years where we have had moments of perhaps community complacency, one such example would be the 2000 and during that period and Panti has gone on the record on that in various academic sources, and as a testament to the fact that we were relatively mainstreamed in institutions, media and society, that there wasn't necessarily an effort or a call to arms as it were, to agitate.

Not that that fed into the lack of formation of queer kinship structures, I think it certainly was still happening, but there weren't necessarily, often time it is can happen through accidental activism and causes that can bring people together that can engender a form of socialisation and kinship formation and I think

marriage equality was a good example of whereas that was the ultimate mainstreaming act, conferring a heteronormative institution and assimilative institution, by the way totally nothing to do with -- that in itself emboldened some sort of kinship structures.

Also, in terms of a very crucial aspect inter-generational dialogue, where like the aunties of Chauncey's 1920s New York, where we got to speak with older queers, would with them on the campaigns, learn from them. Most of the things I've learned about being a good queer has come from figures like Tony Walsh who fostered me one night and taught me lots of fabulous things about queer existence, I think inter-generational dialogue is one such way in which kinship is manifesting now and I'm seeing that quite a lot with queer youths.

Not only that, we're seeing a lot of more public queer figures in academia, and with that we're seeing kinship structures form. The queers are beginning to somewhat break down the walls of academia, we're not there yet, question haven't broken in the academy, but even that in and of itself having public figures like that to communicate and bring queer ideas into the walls of the academy can form these kinship structures I think Rita.

>> Rita: Yes, I certainly see those, one of the things I have heard lots of people talk about, the connection between equal marriage campaign and the repeal campaign, and how kinships were built during one that transferred very easily to another and at the time as well people were saying what are we going to do next? Without having an activist target we're losing the opportunity and we're losing this great community that we built through activism.

>> Paraic: Certainly, absolutely. But at the same time, and to come back at Stefan last week we are seeing resistance to the capitalistic imperatives beginning to govern the queer experience as it is, counter cultural spaces such as that of Spicebag are beginning to form which are really important crucial social engines of engendering that kind of social kinship and social structures amongst queers, and I think there is a resistance to that in queer movements against what

is considered the sanitization, the assimilation of queers into the mainstream and I think there is movements of sorts happening around that.

>> Rita: I see a lot of that, I must say it's very heartening, having seen the subsuming of pride by the corporates and having lived through that awful spot, it is great to see. But I want to bring us back to queer Temporality, explain that to me for an intelligent 16-year-old, what is it?

>> Paraic: Okay so how long is a piece of string? Like everything in queerness, everything in queerness, everything in queerness, it is contested, debated, defined, redefined and recalibrated as everyone understands that's the nature of queerness, but queer Temporality defines the way in which queers approach time and how time intersects with queer lives and how it can sometimes regulate to a particular degree, but also that we don't necessarily have the structures dictated by time.

So for example a life has particular milestones or time stamps that it needs to reach under heteronormative standards, so for example you have to by 18 be a debutante, you then have to get engaged, by a particular age have a child, these are particular societal expectations that have been conferred on heteronormative and those who wish to subscribe to that. Queers don't necessarily have to and they have -- also reproduction, the whole notion of reproducing and having children, that in itself has a relationship with time and when we're producing life, we're reproducing time -- I know I'm sounding philosophical and talking shite

>> Rita: No, it's great stuff!

>> Paraic: With queers there's no futurity and by that we don't have the obligation of reproducing and it doesn't necessarily govern our lives in particular ways. Now of course we have the option to do that if we wish to choose to have families but that's kind of what it is at its most distilled entry point Rita.

>> Rita: Very interesting, so I would think one of the things, is this the right way to put this, one of the queer Temporalities that I experience, is as an older lesbian woman, I don't have the same barriers that older heterosexual women, so for example I wouldn't doubt that I might not meet somebody if I wanted to, I wouldn't doubt that I couldn't have a relationship if my 80s or 90s. I can still go

out dancing and dance till the wee small hours and nobody in my community bats an eye lid at women of my generation doing that. So that's definitely a difference between, in terms of time and expectations of time.

>> Paraic: Exactly. I suppose that time and expectations of time brings us into the current research I'm doing in terms of births. That's a time sample of time, we'll get into that, its kind of reflects all of these.

When we talk about logical families, families we chose we know that because we have been conferred and have access to a lot of rights as LGBTQ people that we can start our own families and create our own families. So, where my research has gone recently is in this area of data for queer lives, and what I mean by that is this whole thing that we're trying to work through, if we think about it, just think of demographic data, think of the likes of the census or any kind of survey that you might do.

Conceptualising demographic data is generally a historically situated, politically inflected interpretive act. What that does is it translates people, their identities and their bodies into these pre-determined statistical categories. As you and I well know you can't necessarily put queers into pre-determined statistical categories, in fact queer pricks at the surface of any kind of formalised identification, so what I'm trying to do is rather than looking at these identities as -- queer identities are sites of complex queer temporality and intersectional multiplicity and this friction between LGBTQ lives and data has this very complex relationship.

What my research is trying to do is we need to begin to reflect on how we can design questions, design data infrastructures and design documents that we put our lives on that respond to a call for data for queer lives. Questions that more accurately and respectfully engage with the complexities of our queer existence, and that's where I'm coming to in terms of the birth certificate.

>> Rita: Hugely important stuff, on this one of the questions I had when we

talked about this area of your work and we talked about the birth certificate and it flowed through this series so far, is this idea of the frames that we were given through which to see and understand ourselves, I am always really interested in knowing whose bad idea was that? So, whose bad idea was the birth certificate?

>> Paraic: I can only speak for the Irish and British context and to a degree we can actually blame Cromwell, I know we like to blame him for a lot but we can blame him for this slightly because the earliest formalised registration of births happened during the Cromwell era in Ireland I think in 1617, if I am wrong I am bad with my historical dates. However, 1617 is when we started recording births and dates in Ireland it wasn't as formalised as we are familiar with, but it happened, that was somewhat the management of the British colony or Irish colony as it was at the time.

Then we come to the Victorian era, and we come to the year 1864 and with that Victorian legislation we have the birth registration act, with that act we have -- and the birth certificate believe it or not actually has not necessarily changed all that much from the Victorian era, it's actually quite striking and part of the reason why I want to do this data for queer lives research is because I feel like we need to modernize the birth certificate. Think it have this way I'm sure many of you have seen your birth certificate it has lots of beneficial things, access to biographical and genetic data, it's proof that we exist, it show that is we were here and we were queer -- not that we were queer, but you know, you get what I mean.

It's just a stamp of sorts, the birth certificate in and of itself does not really fit in with the queer experience. And to come back to your original question, the bad idea came from, because of welfare. And the birth certificate was required to access services of the state or the empire as it was at the time. So, to get an old aged pension you had to have a birth certificate and to access systems of welfare and that of course grew arms and legs as time went on.

Of course, when Ireland succeeded and gained sovereignty and became an independent enter Republic as we did, we fostered similar institutions from the UK to Ireland. So, the birth certificate became quite a similar model and we needed that model here for several things, for access again to welfare, when the welfare state became much more permeated into our social structures in 1950s and 60s, but also for citizenship, you needed a birth certificate for citizenship.

This is all well and good when we're talking about this, but when we talk about dangerous ideas, that becomes quite dangerous and really cumbersome for queers, particularly queer families, when if you are having a child as two gay men, or two women under particular circumstances, only one of those parents can be recognised on the birth certificate. If two gay men in this country have a child, through whatever means, through assisted reproduction or what not, if there is a mother and the mother chooses not to have any part of the child's life and they don't want to and sometimes particular arrangements are made, despite the fact that the mother chooses not to, the birth mother chooses not to have a part of the child's life, they still have all the rights, because the birth certificate is so gendered around the mother in and of itself.

So, what we see begin to emerge is cracks and fissures occur where queers can fall beneath the cracks of these documents because they are so pre-determined statistical categories, so rigid and eventually tick box they can't necessarily look at the fluidity of identity. Even though we talked previously about complex family models and families we chose, it's very difficult to mark those kinds of families with documents like this, there has to be a way to do it, there has to be a way to use the master's tools to destroy this in a way that's effective -- I know I'm being very Utopian and queer in my ideals, but at the very least there has to be a better way of doing it.

>> Rita: This is something we chatted about the first time we ever chatted, and we were kind of talking about this idea and I was saying to you this isn't a new

idea in terms of how we document family, and I remember a conversation at a lesbian lives conference in Dublin in UCD in the 90s, where we were trying to figure out how we could do this, and we came up with the idea of having a book, like a passport, that when you're born, you get your book, and this is your book, your family book, and only you can put somebody in your family book. So, I decide that you're my family Paraic, I go along with me book to the registrar and I say Paraic Kerrigan is hence forth my family, stamp me book!

Now how practical this is I don't know, but it was this, we were trying to get to flip it, where the state doesn't tell me who my family is. I tell the state who my family is. And so, I would be throwing the birth certificate in the bin, as a terrible bad idea. You'd like to reform the birth certificate; you think there's room for making a better document?

>> Paraic: Absolutely, it can happen in varying different ways, we are very early stages in the research, just to give it context where we're at, we're speaking to groups that have been affected and identifying what groups in the LGBTQ community have been affected by that, of course queer families, trans individuals for varying different reasons, we're trying to identify issues specific to those communities and also the common threads that run through them.

In terms of ways to do things then, there is actually some simple things we can do, for one part we can just digitise the thing. It's still in this long form and sometimes a short form written document that you physically have to go into a space, to be present with a registrar and they have to account for your existence. And you've described the family book, I think it's a great idea, and how my colleague Dr amber Cushing theorized this whole concept of personal information burden, what she means by that is when we are made vulnerability by the state because of the lack of recognition, because they cannot see our queer lives, we are burdened with personal information because we now have to insert back or reinsert that back into the story, our story with the state.

That's what a lot of our participants actually referred to the birth certificate. They were like I didn't really care about it, but I kind of realised it when I realised my child, I could not be put down as a named parent for my child, this was my story with the state. This is our child's story with the state and the eyes of the State we're rendered invisible. So how we can change it, digitise it.

New Zealand seem to be doing a lot of things right lately they have a really good system and suggestion. So New Zealand are apparently looking at their official data agency, has proposed -- this is just one such example of how we can modernize demographic data collection in the likes of the census and birth certificate. They propose a gender by default approach to how government collects data about sex and gender, this proposal is part of a broad consultation, what they want to do have a gender by default approach. Where at birth you have a gender that's defaulted, but later in your life you can then choose the gender or preferred gender identity that you would wish. It's pretty much a flexible things, you can go into the digital system when you are of age or when it's decided by the legislator, you can tick the box not only that it's open box, so what that is, it gives you the power and the tools to self-identify in a way that's not pre-determined.

That's a way in which we can perhaps look to modernizing the identity documents, by providing just simple ways by which we can give more openness around that.

>> Rita: That's really interesting, a great idea, fair play to New Zealand they are getting a lot of things right for us. Another thing that I'd like us to touch on briefly, was this idea of legitimate and illegitimate, and how the state gets to decide who's legitimate and who is not? Who can be a legitimate child, who can be a legitimate parent? Where is this power vested in terms of the state? Of granting legitimacy to citizens and how do we get rid of that?

>> Paraic: So am I suppose how it's vested at varying different arms of the government and varying different arms of the legislator, and it can sometimes

happen at really local basis, such as going into your registrar, we spoke to so many people that have gone into their local authorities, be it in Waterford, in Carlow, be that in Westmeath, and the registrar was just a pure and utter homophobe and just refused to work with these people to help them register their two parent.

Other circumstances they'd meet someone really lovely and sometimes it's as simple as crossing something off on the birth certificate and writing something else in instead. So often time it is can happen at that level in local authority, but a lot of these issues could be solved at the Department of Justice level. We have organisations such as equality for children who are doing phenomenal work in and around this area, they are really trying to agitate the department to have a broad reaching legislation that may not necessarily be perfect but at least be massively inclusive in and around that.

So where does it get vested? Varying different levels of the administrative structure of our state I think Rita would be the answer to that.

>> Rita: We're just going to have to burn it down, this is where I come to every week.

>> Paraic: Absolutely. I suppose the take home message I'd like to say is, data is power. And when I say data is power, what I mean is if we have the numbers, we can prove that we need something for queers, I saw something in Slovakia recently where the government, or a body fudged numbers in and around queer community and cut services throughout. We need numbers to prove that firstly we exist, I know it's somewhat assimilatory in practice, we're playing by the rules of the game and the rules that have been designed by those structures in place, but we need to break out in that sense and find ways of doing things I think Rita.

>> Rita: And we do. That's the wonderful thing about the queers, aren't we enormously resourceful? We find ways. We will find the way to do the thing. And change always comes from the ground up.

>> Paraic: For sure.

>> Rita: That's not true, it never works when it comes that way down, but real change comes this way.

So Paraic, we're going to wind it up, we have a nice slow wind up tonight which is nice rather than running out the door. You have a book coming out, tell us about it, you talked about your book last week, tell us about it again.

>> Paraic: Okay my shameless plug on that! A few of you got in touch with me, I definitely will get it out to you, don't worry, but the book is basically looking at the last 40 years, so since the founding of the Irish gay rights movement and Irish gay civil rights movement more broadly from 1974 onwards, I wanted to look at the ways in which queers used media as a form of activism and the ways in which on one hand the media represented queers but on the other hand how queers utilised the media to actually forward the activist agenda.

I have pinpointed varying different moments that particular movements such as, like Laurie and Arthur there, that was a product of their activism within the Cork gay collective and part of their manifesto in 1980 was to put images in the media of queers, of gay men, that just tried to educate people from a positive perspective.

So the book is looking over a span of 40 years and attempts to look at the key cornerstones of queer advisability in Irish media and somewhat the story behind some of those moments, I am sure some of us remember the famous kiss or near kiss on RTE's Fair City back in 1996, the shameless kiss, if you can show that at some point in the future everyone will get a laugh, it's on YouTube, outrageous.

How and ever the story behind that kiss was the kiss was actually meant to happen, the kiss was scripted the actors had rehearsed it, but there was a producer or there was a team on conservative forces on the set that day that said

we can't do that, the soap opera is a valuable media commodity, here we can see capitalism vesting in here yet again to regulate queerness, because we can't have the queers have an auld gay kiss on RTE at 8 o'clock in the evening because God forbid we'll upset sponsorship or Kerry gold butter having an ad break, so those are the kinds of stories I tell.

One other before I head, Johnny Logan, Johnny Logan entered the euro song contest in 1979, it was being held in Mayo that year, he had a song called, my God what was the song called, let's say it was called Jack.

>> Rita: Will be will know what the song is called, put it in the chat.

>> Paraic: It's written in the book I should know off the top of my head! It was about a friend, just a friend, homo social, and RTE before it went out live on the air said Johnny we have to take you aside here, but we need to change it from Jack, because kind of infers that you and Jack were something more than just friends and we can't have that going on air on the euro song contest so he had to change it to Joanie before he went on air, to make it sound like a woman's name, because they didn't even want to infer that there was any kind of queerness on the RTE schedule.

So, it just tells us those kinds of stories that emerge and how queerness emerged as a public discourse in Ireland. The book is called LGBTQ media visibility and sexuality in Ireland. It's somewhat of a good blend I'll send some copies to the gay project as well.

>> Rita: Thank you, now we have yourself, we have Cormac, I believe there's a history book coming out, a queer history book that you told me about is coming out as well, so I think in 2021 we're just going to have to have a wee series of sessions talking about big queer books. Big expensive queer books!

So, we'd love to have you back again Paraic if you'll come back to us

>> Paraic: Always, always.

>> Rita: I am going it thank everybody, really particularly I want to thank the

attendees and the participants, because it's you who are making this so vibrant and so alive for all of us. So, I just really want to thank you all for, on an auld wet Thursday, being part of this queer happening, which is certainly feeding my soul and hopefully doing us all a power of good.

So, I am going to start my thanks with Fiachra, who got landed with this job at the very last minute, literally a few hours before we went on. Fiachra got a phone call going can you help? And fair play, he did. Ellen, also got that phone call and jumped in at the very last minute to help us out. And I have to say you look very fetching in those glasses Ellen, they really are good. Thanks so much and we're looking forward to having you back on the 17th, to talk to us about fandom and I believe you're going to come as Morrissey? We'll not hold you to that.

Thomas, it was so great to have you as a focus and look at some of the amazing work you are doing and people can check out Thomas, look him up, he is on Vimeo, he has Thomas -- stick it in the chat there where people can find you on Vimeo, he has some lovely videos, I watched one today I hadn't seen before, which was putting on a sheet, and I laughed out loud at Thomas making the bed, so go and check out that video.

Kate has left us I think, has Kate left us? And Gemma has left us, but I want to thank Gemma and Kate for again another amazing Break for Art. Ailsa as ever has been doing a fantastic job in the chat, and Sarah our Tech Fairy, again has kept us all looking good. And thanks a million, to our captioner Michelle, for another brilliant job. That's it from us, Thomas, you can turn us off!

>> Thomas: Bye everyone, take care, see you next time.

Session concludes.