


Project: 'Queer Lives: Barriers from Cradle to Elder Care -An oral history' Respondent: Amber Roberts Year of Birth: 1987 Age: Connection to project: Local Knowledge Date of Interview: 23.08.2024 Interviewer: Billy Ferrie Recording Agreement: Yes Information & Consent: Yes Photographic Images: Yes (Number of: 1) Length of Interview: 01.09.55 Location of Interview: The Marie Trust, Glasgow Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)		Glasgow's Southside+ Stories 
Time (from: mins/secs)	Description	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
00.40-00.42	<i>Where were you born and brought up?</i>	
	"I was born just outside of Edinburgh. I grew up in West Lothian until I was about five when we moved through here to Edinburgh."	00.43-00.52
00.54	<i>Where do you live now?</i>	
	"Edinburgh."	00.56
00.57-01.11	<i>We've used the term Queer in an attempt to be as inclusive as possible, but we appreciate that not everybody is going to use that term to describe themselves. Is there a term you would prefer me to use?</i>	
	"I'm fine with that."	01.12
01.13	<i>Do you have any preferred pronouns?</i>	
	"She/Her."	01.14
01.19	<i>Would you mind telling me if you have come out as queer and if so when was this?</i>	
	"I'd say 2012."	01.243
01.27	<i>Have you faced any barriers to accessing education due to being queer?</i>	
	"Potentially, yes, but a lot of the barriers I faced also comes from being disabled. I have a range of disabilities such as Autism, ADHD and Fibromyalgia, so being autistic isn't really an easy thing to do when in education as it is, but being trans and autistic in education there's a lot more difficulties because sometimes as an autistic person I can't tell when somebody is being legitimate or has legitimately got things wrong and over the years I've taken that as somebody who might be legitimately mistaken and I've also seen that as malice at some point. I don't now because I've managed to understand certain things but when I was in education, I could not tell the difference if somebody was being malicious or not with getting my pronouns wrong."	01.47-03.04
03.10`	<i>What support if any did you get at school, college or whatever?</i>	

	<p>"At college I was supported to get a fair bit but the department of the college I was at was absolutely God awful. For example, one of the courses I was on I had to say to a lecturer that I was autistic, and he turned round in a meeting while I was there and said, 'oh I didn't realise that Amber was autistic'. He said in a meeting that he thought I wasn't being truthful about being autistic and as I wasn't presenting the norm to being female he just thought, as many people do today, oh you're just saying you're trans but you're not. That kind of attitude that we see more regularly now, but that was definitely there when I was at college and first started transitioning and that shook a lot of my confidence along with the system at the college at the time.</p> <p>Moving forward a few years to when I went to West College Scotland to do my course there, again I was met with the exact same barriers and one lecturer for some reason just did not want to engage with me and he would engage with every other member of the class apart from the one trans person in the class. So, you can understand how I felt being singled out by a lecturer and other lecturers at the college not paying attention to that. When it came to me expressing my concerns about this lecturer, it fell on deaf ears, there was no point in doing any more because nobody would listen."</p>	03.13-05.43
08.00	<i>Do you think things have changed over time?</i>	
	<p>From an autistic point of view, probably not for an autistic adult.</p> <p>From a trans point of view, it's got worse, with people not accepting trans people in general, queer people in general, non-binary people, inter-sex people. it's a shit storm out there for people who just want to live their lives and in education, colleges don't seem to take things at all very seriously. Society has to realise that we are all just humans."</p>	08.09-10.03
14.00	<i>How can you see that change happening?</i>	
	<p>"We have a government who is just continuing to throw us under the bus. Puberty blockers have now been banned, we can't even go outside the country to have puberty blockers brought in because they've closed that loophole. We can't help young people who are struggling with their own gender identity and it's just as simple as giving them puberty blockers and getting them the help they need to figure all this out. By taking away puberty blockers I've seen since there's been a ban there's been a rise in children's suicide because they're not getting the help they want and that is horrid, so many of these children's lives lost and that's because the government doesn't understand and that's not right. We should be giving them the option to transition as young as eight if they want to and if not at 8 then they should be given that opportunity when they are legally competent which in the UK is 10 years old, to make that decision."</p>	14.05-20.12
20.32	<i>Have you faced any barriers in the workplace due to being queer?</i>	
	<p>Yes, I have. I used to work at Costa Coffee and in the first place I worked at the manager didn't fully understand how to react to certain things. I was asking for a woman's uniform but the sizes didn't go up to my size, that's not my fault, that's not the manager's fault, it's the company's fault for not doing that but there was unisex uniforms which I was made to wear because the women's ones were too small for me, the men's ones were too big for me and it did not fit who I was. I wear neutral clothes because I'm terrified of going outside in the clothes that I'd like to do such as dresses, skirts, and it's only in the last five or ten years that I've been that scared to do it because of how hostile it is out there. I was in a fringe show about ten years ago and that was</p>	20.33-23.20

	the happiest I've ever been, being accepted as a woman, wearing a skirt with tights on. I was treated as a woman to the extent where I sang as part of the women and not as part of the men and all the reviews we got, none of them focused on the fact that I was trans. One review said there was good representation of the L.G.B.T. community. So, what's changed in the last few years? Social media. Elon Musk taking over Twitter making it a slaughter zone for queer people, making life so difficult for trans people."	
24.01	<i>Do you think things have improved in the work environment for queer people or remained the same?</i>	
	"My job is a photographer and when I go out to do a job my disabilities stop me from working as much as I'd like. I've have tried some photography where people don't want to work with a trans person photographer. Generally, that's what I've seen, as soon as people see I'm trans they'll go and find another photographer. I don't know about retail; I just know from my own experiences there's so much pressure against being trans at the moment for anybody wanting work that unless you are in somewhere like Costa where there are strict rules around equality... Being a freelance photographer is much more difficult than people can understand being trans."	24.02-25.43
26.00	<i>What was your experience growing up as a queer person?</i>	
	<p>I grew up in a children's home where I was terrified to even say that I wanted to be a girl. I maybe mentioned it once or twice at school and got ridiculed for it and people put it down to- oh that's just a phase they'll grow out of it etc. But I never did.</p> <p>When I was in that fringe show that was one of the times I felt completely accepted and I would do that again in a heartbeat because that entire week was great.</p> <p>I grew up when Section 28 was about. I grew up when being L.G.B.T.+ was illegal, so there was no support. When I finally came out as trans and started transitioning in 2012 I was utterly terrified because in the space of six months I had lost my entire biological family at that time because my biological mother turned round to me when I finally worked up the courage to talk to her about it, she said I cannot support this, she said I was asking her to bury her son and accept a daughter that she didn't want. I've never forgotten those words and that was 12 years ago and I will not forget those words until the day I die and I have no contact with that woman because of the way she's treated me and so I looked to my friends and some of those friends became my new family. I was adopted into a new family, and they have been the most wonderful and supportive people, and I wouldn't have been able to transition, I'd have been dead, it's that simple."</p>	26.10-29.15
29.27	<i>Do you think experiences like yours has changed over time? Has it become easier for other people?</i>	
	"When Section 28 was over it was a fantastic thing, all of a sudden being L.G.B.T. wasn't illegal, people were allowed to be their authentic self and people just came out left, right and centre. Some were still terrified and it took a few years, but eventually we've got to where we are today where people, especially for being lesbian, bi-sexual or gay aren't afraid to come out of the closet but again now what we're stuck with is Section 28 again but strictly for trans people and that's what's happening in society today."	29.30-30.18
31.34-31.49	<i>Do you believe there's such a thing as a LGBT community which implies a coherent group identity based solely on shared sexual orientation or gender identity?</i>	

	<p>Yes, the L.G.B.T.+ community that I know is fully inclusive, fully supportive and you just need to tell that community who you are, they will listen, they will support you and they will defend you. There is another community, the L.G.B. community that hates trans people, don't want trans people in the L.G.B.T.+ community and some people don't want trans people which isn't right. So, no there is an L.G.B.T.+ community but it is not the ones that are hateful, it's the ones that are accepting, that are kind, that are loving and treat each other equally regardless.</p> <p>I've thought about gender identity a lot over the years and controversially sometimes other sides do get it right. There is a difference between sex and gender but there's only one difference and that is gender is what you present yourself as to the world, what you tell people you are and then if you look at sex it is biological and there's only one place that matters where biology matters and that is to medical staff. We don't need to know about other people's sex we need to know about other people's gender because gender is what people see on a daily basis, it's what you present and it's what you tell people who you are. Chromosomes and DNA doesn't tell you who you are as a person, it tells you who you are biologically, but a person is a lot more than biology."</p>	31.51-33.49
35.47	<i>Has socialising changed from your youth to socialising now?</i>	
	<p>"I want to say yes it has changed but honestly it hasn't. From the moment I came out because I came out we went to pubs and clubs often, the same group of people and that's a large community like a couple of hundred people I would socialise with in any given week, and when I came out to all them as trans not one person batted an eyelid. Not one person persecuted me, not one person said anything bad about me, they said OKAY what's your name and how do we refer to you as? Today we call that pronoun. So, I said my name is Amber. y pronouns were she/her and that's all my friends have ever done since. So no, it hasn't changed in that sense. If I was to go to a pub or club because I only frequent the places that my group, my friends are at, I wouldn't get much hate and if I did 95% of the establishment I was in would have something to say to defend me."</p>	36.01-37.22
37.23	<i>In terms of venues would you like to see more of those places where you feel more accepted?</i>	
	<p>"I honestly hate to say it but queer venues as we can call them, were there because of Section 28 to let people know you're safe here, you can be your authentic self here. We shouldn't need that now in this society and indeed if you paint on the front of a building that it is L.G.B.T.+ or queer inclusive it is going to be attacked. We've seen that up and down the country over the last 10 years. We've seen that in America, we've seen that here in the U.K. So, we should be pushing for everywhere to be queer friendly, not just specific places."</p>	37.37-38.32
38.33	<i>Have you been to any queer venues abroad?</i>	
	<p>"I did go to Paris a couple of years ago, but I did notice a culture difference in Paris. I, maybe I was just lucky, but from the moment I made it to my hotel they didn't ask my gender, nor did they assume my gender, instead it was 'hello how are you, what's your name please?' I said my name is Amber and they were like, 'just to confirm you're a woman?' I said, 'I am, yes thank you', and that was it. Any shops that I went into in Paris nobody batted an eyelid. So, in Paris, I found it to be very accepting for queer people."</p>	38.34-39.41

39.58	<i>Have you had any healthcare issues due to being queer?</i>	
	<p>“When I started my transition, I was referred to Dr Miscoe at The Royal Infirmary. I had my first meeting, and it was outlined what would happen and I was advised by Dr Miscoe that I would have treatment two years after the initial appointment. So, I was given a timeframe that I would have lower surgery in two years. Six months later Dr Miscoe had resigned. So now we’re 18 months into my transition, hadn’t started any hormones yet, still waiting on the information on when this is going to happen and I said to Dr Gower because this is the first I’ve spoken to a doctor since Dr Miscoe left, ‘when am I going to have my surgery because I was told it was going to be happening six months from now, I was told a year and half ago that it would be in two years’. Dr Gower’s first words were ‘what’s the rush?’. He then proceeded to treat me, not like a human being, but treat me as if I was lesser than him. He didn’t prescribe HRT to me. It wasn’t until I saw another doctor, Dr Sarah Kennedy when she took over the clinic in Edinburgh at Chalmers, and everything started moving at a faster pace, I was put on to hormones, I getting laser for my face, everything was happening as it should’ve done before Dr Miscoe left. Then after about a year I asked when I was getting my surgery, and she said ‘Well, this is now December, so we’ll probably aim for Easter’. Easter came and went, when am I having my surgery and was told well we’ve missed Easter so it’ll have to be nearer Christmas this year, and this happened for two years until I was sick and tired of being messed around by yet another doctor at the GIC and I made a complaint to Lothian Health Board. The next meeting that I had with Dr Kennedy was delayed by 30 minutes and then when I finally got into the room, and I was introduced to members of the Board, and I could tell she had been grilled by them prior to my entering the room. Then everything started going normal again. I then got referred to getting laser done down near my genitals and that took a while and yet I was still no further on as to when I was having surgery. I then found out that I was being referred to a Dr Thomas regarding surgery which was to take place down in Nuffield in Brighton and this was because there was no urologist that can do gender re-assignment in Scotland at the time. The doctor I had at Nuffield was very good, he was fully understanding and fully capable of doing the job that he was doing and treated me like a human being. I got my surgery; everything went completely fine. Sadly, Dr Thomas who performed the surgery passed away after contracting Covid.”</p>	40.09-45.53
52.55	<i>Have you ever thought about the future as you age as a trans person?</i>	
	<p>“I’ve not thought about it, no, because I think it’s pointless. Thinking about what my healthcare will be like when I’m seeing what’s happening now with people going through it, so there won’t be healthcare for people like me when we’re older because we’ll be such a minority of maybe 1,000 people in the U.K. because many people will have committed suicide by then. So, when I’m dead there probably won’ be any trans people because of the way the Government’s going the way they’re going. So, there won’t be any trans people alive in 30/40 years. On the other hand what I’d like to see is prostate checks for trans women, yes trans women have prostates so that needs to be checked but there currently isn’t a system for that because I’m marked as female on the medical system but it should be individual G.Ps that should have on their own notes that at a certain age, they should check prostate because there is a large number of people dying because they’ve not been checked.</p>	53.07-55.40

	On the other side of this I would like to see menopause treatment being given to trans men. We're all human beings and need to be treated as human beings."	
57.29	<i>Can you think of any Government legislation that has brought more rights for queer people?</i>	
	"Equal marriage. Then the Equality Act of 2010. Then we've got the gender recognition act of 2021. We also have the Hate Crime Act as well."	57.40-59.05
59.40	<i>Would you say there's public support for equal rights of queer people?</i>	
	"Yes, I would say there is. It's hard for anybody to see through the thorns of social media. Something that all queer people need to hear is that social media is riddled with hate, but it is not the will of the people as a whole. The general public are very accepting of our community."	59.47-1.01.33
1.02.23	<i>Can you give any examples of positive portrayals of queer/trans people in the arts/media?</i>	
	"We have a lot of good trans people who are journalists, we have a lot of queer people who are in film/T.V., we've got lots of people who are queer that are in a broad range of things and the vast majority of people wouldn't even look at them and think they're queer. The biggest impact has come from one incredibly resilient human being who was Janey Godley. She had been under fire for years for supporting the trans community so vehemently that she was one of our biggest allies."	1.02.42-1.04.12
1.06.19	<i>That's all my questions, is there anything I've missed, or you would like to add?</i>	
	There are certain things that happens in life that we do have to accept that sex is important, but only medically but something I've noticed the queer people are doing a lot is hating people like me just because we still like a franchise like Harry Potter. I would not have survived my childhood I would not have survived my teenage years if it hadn't been for the Harry Potter series so I hold that very close and dear to me and to hear people in the queer community saying that you're not a real ally if you still support Harry Potter and that franchise. Harry Potter is so much bigger than one evil woman who is so misguided that it's not worth trying to mention but we have to remember that it's not about what we like, it's not about the things we cling on to because they mean something to us personally, it is about how we treat each other and just because someone like Harry Potter takes me back to when I was a kid, I was a Celtic fan, anybody who was a Rangers fan would slag me off, and yes as a kid I'd do the same to them, this is the adult equivalent, slagging someone off because of a team they support or franchise they like. Some people say Star Trek is better; some people say Star Wars is better. It's not about the franchises we like, that we enjoy, that help keep us centred, it's about what we do outside of our spare time and how we help our community grow and be better than what we've seen already, we don't need to threaten people, we don't need to give out death threats, we don't need to give threats of violence, we're not a violent community and that's being portrayed in the media so much that the queer community is a bunch of violent vagabonds and it's something that we need to be aware of because we cannot be going around, as has happened time and time again, threatening other people to kill them or to beat them up or to throw milkshakes at them because we're better than that."	1.06.39-1.09.42
1.09.43	<i>Thank you for sharing your experiences, Amber.</i>	

