

Interview conducted and transcribed by Caroline Green ('16) on October 25th, 2015 at ZSR Library.

Transcript of Interview:

Q: [00:01-00:25] Okay, so I guess we should start with your name, gender pronouns, how would you describe your gender and sexual orientation. That's more for, you know, recording.

A: So my name is Will Daniel, I'm a gay male. Pronouns would be, we just talked about, he, him and his, there we go. Gender identity is male.

Q: [00:26-04:24] Cool. So when we were thinking about interview questions for you, we realized that you would be coming, you know, from the history panel and that might jog some memories. Is there any particular anecdote that you want to start out with?

A: I was interested in the history panel because it showed a whole time range between the 19-late 80s, early 90s all the way up to, you know, more recent graduates, and there were some gaps in between and I was thinking how I fit into these gaps because I was in, at Wake Forest between 04 and 08. And I heard a student speak after the 08 period, who graduated in 2013 who basically talked about how positive an experience, how non-controversial his sexuality had been in the context of Wake Forest and I heard on the opposite end sort of how the 90s to late90s was a very trying time, so I thought how I do I fit into this, cause it was kind of in between the two when I was here. And I guess, you know, the anecdote that popped into my head didn't have as much to do with my sexuality, it was just how I fit myself into the Wake Forest society. In my freshman year, I lived in Johnson, which I'm not sure if it still is but it was substance free housing. And so, I'm from North Carolina and most of the people on my hallway were from North Carolina, although probably from smaller towns than Charlotte, where I grew up. And one thing that happened the first week of school, it was 2004 so it was an election year. It was the year that George W. Bush was re-elected to his second term as president, and so, I had been active in I guess sort of why I'm a political scientist, I was interested in politics and I had a John Kerry poster and a John Kerry t-shirt. Not that I was particularly interested in John Kerry, actually [laughs], but he was the nominee and I was just kind of being a good partisan, I guess. I remember my first week at Wake Forest, a student from my hall, that I hadn't met yet, sort of registering who each other was, and how we fit into the hall, and him saying, "oh yeah you're Alex's roommate, you're that guy, you're that democrat, you're that guy that has the Kerry poster in the room. I was like 'Oh great, like if this is our starting point this is going to be an interesting time, and that really symbolizes a lot for me of what my experience at Wake Forest was- it was a clashing of worlds. I came into Wake Forest, I came out in high school to my mom and to my close friends and to my dad a little bit later on, right around the time that I started college, so I was out for the entirety of my time here, I sort of met people that way, as a gay male. And for me, that wasn't a controversial thing. I came from a very supportive family, I actually learned what it meant what it meant to be a gay male from my church through positive experiences because it was a very progressive church that had a fair number of gay adults in it. And so coming to Wake Forest, which made sense for a lot of other reasons that we could talk about, was a little bit like hitting a wall in a way because it was the stuff that I was aware of in the culture around me in North Carolina but it was not stuff that I dealt with directly in my face

until I got here. So you know it was just kind of things like having a t-shirt from a democratic candidate became sort of a jokingly controversial thing, but you're a 'that guy' sort of thing, resonated a little bit with the way then my sexual identity also played a role in my freshman year as well running across different hurdles. It was a good starting and I was just thinking 'what was the culture climate like in 2004 when I started?' Well it was a time of construction in a way, of dislocation, you know, a bit of the old, the Johnson substance free small town North Carolina atmosphere and a lot of the new, sort of students from all over the country and the world who sort of were like 'what the heck are we doing here?' And I was a little bit in between the two. So yeah.

Q: [04:26-05:22] So, since you were out throughout your time at Wake, what was your relationship to the LGBT community?

A: My freshman year there was a really cute boy and I'm not really sure, Patrick and I are still good friends, but to me he caught my eye, and I'm not really sure exactly when we first connected, it was just part of the orientation process. And basically, I had not had a boyfriend before and I was just like, 'I want to get to know this guy' and so [laughter]. And so at some point he was just like, 'you should come to GSSA,' and so I went I guess the first meeting or one of the first meeting that Fall and so I became a part of GSSA and remained a part of GSSA the whole time that I was at Wake going all four years, held a couple of.. not ever president, but you know I think I was social chair one year and communications. That was my most direct plug in to that community here.

Q: [05:23-07:02] And at that time what was the sort of attitude towards GSSA?

A: You know it kinda goes back to, this is where the John Kerry thing popped into my head initially, is that most of the kids who were in GSSA the four years I was here were not gay, it was mostly straight allies. And that's maybe not entirely fair to say in terms of like actual numbers, but that's how they feel that it had. There were not a lot of out, gay men and not hardly any out gay or lesbian females, bisexuals, I mean that sort of popped up along the way. But especially the sort of initial reaction I had to the GSSA group was it was almost like, if I had to describe them, we didn't have Glee as a tv show before, but it was sort of Gleeks. It was kind of like embracing being weird and queer and different and it almost seemed like a reaction to the prevalent culture, which you know is much more buttoned down, conservative socially speaking and so it was just sort of the misfit a bit and that, I certainly also resonate with that as well. And that was an embracing and positive thing for me. A lot of the way I think of my time at Wake, as a gay man, as also, you know was it me, I guess in tension with sexuality or just in tension with general cultural norms about being progressive, about being conservative? How does that all fit in? I'm not sure, there's definitely some instances that we can talk about that it was very much about sexuality. The climate in general was just a very transitional climate, you know, in that era five years ago [laughter].

Q: [07:05-10:22] So what were your observations about the ways people deviated or conformed to gender roles? You mention not many people being out lesbians.

A: Yeah, and I'm not sure exactly given the public, I don't want to, I don't know, discuss other people in this context for their own privacy, but there were two people who stick out in my mind as being particularly instructive as models in GSSA at that time. There was a person identified as a transgender male, biologically female, but you know, identified with male gender roles. And I don't ever remember having a conversation about pronouns, but that was a bit of, you know, what...in any event there was some gender questioning with this person and they were in a relationship with another individual who was also questioning gender roles. One was biologically female and the other was biologically male but there was some discussion about how they identified gender and that was a really curious puzzle to me, that was not something that I had really been sort of presented with. I came in, like I said, fairly confident with this sort of gay male schtick, but maybe not so much with gender identity as an issue. And so, it was instructive, I guess. It was good to know them and pick their brains a bit and hear what sorts of things were coming through their mind as they delved into this sort of trans world. That's the first thing that comes to mind with specifically gender identity. I guess the other thing that sort of crops up about questioning gender roles was that, I lived on campus the first 2 years and the second year I lived in Huffman house, which I don't know if it still exists...[Interviewer: It does.] It does, well, okay so theme housing for diversity but you know of these sort of gleek variety [laughter] these sorts of weird misfit variety and although, actually, it was in Efird. So it wasn't Huffman house, it was Huffman house in exile, whenever I lived there but there I don't know what the arrangement would have been institutionally with residence life, but it was almost as if they just gave us a block of rooms and a set of keys and just left us alone maybe because they were uncomfortable with us and who was going to be there. But it was a little bit like Lord of the Flies there because everyone always kept their doors open all the time and all these different men and women were living in different rooms that they maybe weren't supposed to be according to the university administration but so that was another thing about sort of gender bending because we had gender neutral bathrooms that year and that floor. Efird is hall style, or at least it was then, and so there were hall bathrooms and we all made a commitment to not worry about men and women using the same facilities. I think there were two bathrooms in not a terribly long hall, so two bathrooms and either person of either gender could go into either bathroom. I don't know if that was just among us that we just said that would be a norm for our space or if that was something that someone had condoned with the university, maybe they didn't want us to do that, but yes that was another thing. And that was a little bit, once again, a curious puzzle to me, 'Oh okay, how do I feel about this,' taking stock, didn't really bother me at all so that was fine, but it came up for sure.

Q: [10:23-11:23] Any interesting stories from that experience?

A: [Laughter] There was a little bit of, you know, undergrads exploring their sexuality in the shared shower situation that I recall [laughter], so that but that wasn't, I think that that could have happened in any dorm, it certainly has [laughter]. So other than that sort of functional day to day stuff, the couple that I mentioned earlier that were sort of trans of some way, and I haven't kept up with them so I'm not sure how they identify today, but they were roommates, you know, biologically male and female and I would see both of them in the shower, they were next door, I would see both of them in the bathroom just getting ready in the morning. And it actually wasn't weird to me at all, thinking back on it now, I'm surprised I hadn't thought about it until you

asked about it. It was just like, 'Eh, I guess you're 19, you're 20, whatever, you know we're all wearing towels,' you know, so it's fine.

Q: [11:24-18:28] Were there other aspects of your identity, you know, political affiliations, that shaped your experience here at Wake?

A: Yeah, religion was a big one. I came to Wake Forest on two scholarships. I was a Presidential Scholar in Voice, which was a great plug in to an attractive arts community, which I'd always grown up being a part of and wanting to embrace and be involved, so it was a great thing, not at all in conflict, but I was also a Poteat, and so I was a North Carolina Baptist Scholar. And as I mentioned earlier, for me that wasn't in conflict on a personal level because I had grown up in a very progressive Baptist Church that, very similar to Wake Forest Baptist on campus, we grew up going to a same sort of summer camp. And Chris Copeland, who spoke earlier, I knew as a youth minister when he worked in Atlanta for a similar church and he was my camp counselor when I was in middle school. So it was a group of people who had already said these are Baptists too and that's okay. So coming here on both those scholarships, I was expecting to be involved in both Baptist life as well as music life and so trying to figure out how that identity that I already had fairly strongly concrete in my head would fit in with the Baptists and music people here was really where the conflict sort of came, I guess. I guess if there was one, the most uncomfortable experiences at wake came out of that sort of history. And so I joined Kai Rho, my first fall freshman semester, is it still around? [Interviewer: Yes, yes]. It's a men's a capella Christian group, which you know, has at least at the time, performing in churches, rehearsing a couple times a week with music, but also having bible study. And to me that sounded, at least on the face of it, perfect. It was music that was fun to sing, it was a group of guys who liked to do that together, the bible study was an outlet to work with the campus ministry. I did preschool before, do they still have preschool? [Interviewer: They do, yep] Well I did preschool all four years so it was definitely wanting to be plugged in with campus ministry, but talk about hitting a wall. Kai Rho was a big wall that fall. And in it, you know, in retrospect it's understandable that there were lots of different strands of Christianity, Kai Rho was not one particular denomination, at least it wasn't, but there were certainly a lot more in there, students who sort of came from Pentecostal backgrounds and non-denominational evangelical backgrounds, people who would have been involved with InterVarsity or RUF, conservative Presbyterian groups. And you kind of throw them all together as a group of guys, and since it was also arts, there were also a lot of guys in that group who were closeted, who came out at later points in time or maybe they didn't, but people were aware of sort of things going on with their sexuality. And it was a little bit of a self-loathing group. There was a lot of really damaging discussion that went down in that group during bible studies that first semester. I remember one time, the leader of that bible study leading a bible study about this concept that he called spiritual warfare and it was basically the righteous good people on the planet versus the evil, satanic, sort of leading us all to hell sort of people. And the gays were named in the group of the leading us all to hell category and you know, those of us who embraced that or were part of that or identified as gay were you know basically instruments of spiritual warfare against the righteous good or something. I was not out to them initially that year so they were not aware that I had come in to Wake as sort of feeling like I was well-adjusted or something and certainly needed more adjusting from there [chuckles]. That was hugely controversial because that, to me, conflictual is the right thing in my head because it was, I felt like I was comfortable enough to identify what was going on there, and to

say I know where I fit in to this equation and I know what I believe and I know what I don't believe, but that still takes a whole psychological toll on you especially when you say this is going to be my outlet. Kai Rho, you know, it was the popular kids, it was the thing to get into and you're going to perform which is fun and you're gonna sing and then you've got people basically talking about gay conversion therapies, which a lot of them had already experienced or would later go on to experience. Exodus International, I don't know if that still exists, but it was a group that would lead, it wasn't at Wake, but there were chapters in the Winston-Salem area that would lead sort of gay therapy. The guys in Kai Rho at the time had been a part of that, and so that was really, yeah, that was just damaging to me. And so I had to say at the end of the first semester, 'yeah I need to step away from this,' and that was really sad, it was defeating, in a way. I even, I still feel bad, I've never talked about it before and I don't mind that it's public in an archive, that's if anyone ever looks it up, but it felt like a bit of a defeat because it wasn't, I came in there feeling like I could be a positive role model and just the stress of freshman year college plus that, I just had to say, 'this is not gonna be me, I'm not going to be part of this, I can't do this, I'm not, I don't have the tools to fight back on this or to adjust this.' And you know, I think that group has changed a lot because over the time I was at Wake, up until 2008, a lot of the guys who were you know leadership initially, graduated, and other ones came out. And definitely some out gay individuals in that group and that became a group that was quite unique in a positive way in a way I would have hoped it would have been. And I kind of wished I would have stuck around for the ride, but it was just kind of, identifying something as toxic and saying you needed to walk away from it. And so that set another tone for the rest of my time at Wake because you know, talking about identities, wanting to embrace being a Baptist, wanting to embrace being a Christian, that set a tone that it was going to be a hard road ahead if I wanted to stay in touch with that community and if I was going to, I was going to have to be very ginger about the way I approached it. And so I never feel like I, I still don't feel like I, was fully invested in the campus ministry that I wish I had and I actually think it's kind of removed me a bit from church even after that, as a result. Not to say there aren't good places on campus, and there were great places on campus for embracing ministry. I'm not sure if you've ever met Becky Hartside, which she was at the time in charge of BSU and then she became part of the chaplain group and Tim Alman. I mean there are some phenomenal resources in campus ministry and BSU itself was a very moderate to embracing group of Baptists and I met some great people there, but it was always with a little bit of hesitancy and I don't blame that on anyone in particular, I blame it on myself more than anyone not to try a little bit harder, but yeah, that's kinda where those two different, or multiple different hats sort of came in.

Q: [18:30-20:00] What about, for the other three years that you were at Wake, what other kind of identities were at play? Or was it still the religious?

A: My own journey at Wake changed a lot as I went up in years, probably as any college student does, so if I came in thinking those would be sort of outlets for me, I found a whole lot of outlets that were not related to either of those things. I stayed active in GSSA the whole time, spent my entire junior year abroad and lived off campus when I came back as a senior and was at Huffman the sophomore year. So, I guess I kinda had like four different chapters to Wake Forest, they're all a little different. So it was like throw yourself in as a freshman, identify yourself as a little bit weird so you go live in Huffman your second year, go off campus, very far off campus, your entire junior year, meeting a whole bunch of people. I studied abroad with a bunch of people I

hadn't met before then and brought them back as you know, best friends. Senior years those social circles were different so yeah, I definitely by the time I had graduated from Wake felt as though I had had a lot of different identities, being active in different organizations, traveling a lot, meeting lots of different groups of people, I still had freshman friends, but also Huffman friends, but also abroad friends, and music friends, I was kind of a bit of a floater I guess.

[Interviewer: Yeah; Interviewee: Yeah]

Q: [20:01-20:39] Where'd you study abroad?

A: I interned the summer after my sophomore year in Paris working for what is now Oxfams [unclear], it's this kind of social, it's an NGO that deals specifically with things like fair trade and so it was political science meets, I was a political science, French double major, and it was both of these things at once, which was great. And then I studied in Dijon, on the Dijon program, my junior year and then spring of my junior year went to the Flow House to study political science. So just kind of got one of everything [laughs]. [Interviewer: That's great!; Interviewee: Yeah, no it was wonderful.]

Q: [20:41- 21:38] Did you feel safe on campus?

A: Yeah. Yeah. No, I never felt unsafe in any way and [pauses] there's a sort of guilt there, actually, because earlier today, there was a speaker, a student, who you know, white, male, gay, basically talking about his acknowledging his privilege, being a, you know, only having the gay thing as the one hurdle to overcome, as opposed to all the other things that could have made him feel more marginalized and more unsafe and I identify with that strongly. Whereas I could easily pass or fit in to lots of different communities in a way and have embraced lots of different communities at Wake and never feeling specifically targeted inside or outside of campus, the whole time I was here.

Q: [21:41- 22:36] So what was your experience being in a residence hall your freshman year?

A: Yeah it was a bit of awkward don't tell with the roommate, but I'm sure lots of freshman roommates, I know lots of freshman roommates have these sorts of experiences regarding sexuality or otherwise. I mean it was just a bit of how do you learn to coexist with someone in a closed space that you've never met before you're told to coexist with them in a closed space [laughs]. So sexuality and those sorts of questions really didn't come up really directly. My freshman roommate was a very intelligent student, he graduated early, he was a very hard worker, he was often times in the library and it was just, there wasn't much of a social connection, it wasn't a warm connection, but it wasn't hostile and we never had a direct discussion about me being gay or if that was a thing or, it just yeah, just peaceful coexistence I guess.

Q: [22:41-23:58] So you were living openly gay but, so were you kind of selective with who you came out with? Not coming out to the freshman roommate or Kai Rho?

A: It's still my, it's still my sort of question in life in some ways. How do you come out? And when do you come out? I can feel comfortable about it but also I'm not someone who feels the

need to produce or manufacture some sort of conversation about it unless it's relevant or maybe I kind of already just wish it had been produced in a previous life and I just didn't have to cover it, right? Usually how I come out to people, I...it's probably, it's really bad on my part, I'm usually am like, I usually just assume, I'll pretend that I assume that they knew or something and just make some sort of comment, some sort of sideways comment, about a guy I would be dating or I don't know, something like that. Just kinda try to slip it into conversation in a way that pretends that they probably heard it before and they didn't. I don't know. That's kind of usually my MO, cause, I don't know, maybe I've been too much of a white-washing thing, but try to make it not an issue. That's kinda how I was throughout college and it was easier to already be out and in that sense it's always easier when you're out.

Q: [24:00-27:04] What was it like with your parents?

A: It was good, eventually. Well it was good much more quickly than for a lot of people and once again, in that respect, I'm incredibly lucky. I'm incredibly fortunate to have wonderful supporting family and sisters as well, not just parents to come out to. My...I told my mom my junior year of high school. She was, the first person I told was the girl that I was dating for much of high school, who took it all so wonderfully, although I was a jerk and to be dating her for that long [laughs] and not bring it up. Yeah so I told my mom, so she was the second person I told, thereabouts but I handled it very poorly. Once again, I didn't know how to confront it directly so I just tried to slide it in there and the way that I did that was, if I had a child who ever did this I would kill him so I feel bad about it, I had an English project my junior year that was supposed to get you thinking about writing applications for college and it was you know a sort of self-identity kind of essay sort of thing and I had a very bad day at school one day my junior year of high school and I wrote this very long, almost you know slam poetry kind of thing about my identity and how awful it was to be a highschooler and gay was part of that. And I'd never shared that with anyone, obviously, and my mom, who is a teacher, wanted to read my work because she was interested in what I was working on. And I said, 'I don't really want you to see this,' and she said 'Well I want to see it, why can't I see everything?' you know and so we had a fight about something else, being the asshole teenager that I was, and I just left it on her place to read at the table one morning. I was just like, 'Fine! Read this,' and then she read that and that was really hurtful to her, not because of the content, but because of the delivery and that was my mistake. But yeah, it took her a little bit. We didn't really talk about it, I would say, until my fall of my freshman year, I would say, we didn't have a whole direct conversation about me being gay. It was just swept under the rug a little bit. And I was experimenting a little bit my senior year with telling people in my social circles and seeing how they reacted to that and sort of testing out the waters and so that was okay with me that it was swept under the rug because I wasn't... I didn't really, in high school, out. It was just selectively, I mean I told the English teacher who I wrote the paper for and she wrote a wonderful letter just how much you know, she felt about that, and was just wonderful support for that. And then, I guess it changed my freshman fall because I had this cute boy who I followed to GSSA ended up being my first boyfriend and he...then I had to bring him home and tell dad about, and tell sisters about. And that all ended up being okay a lot more quickly than it is for a lot of people. So I'm very blessed for that.

Q: [27:08-29:56] Were there supportive faculty or staff at Wake? Like that teacher?

A: At Wake, Mary Gerardy, is you know the obvious answer. She was quickly identified to me as the patron saint of wandering and lost students in a lot of ways, for not just gay, although she's made, been such a champion for that. So I quickly identified her and she at that time, she and Gis Womack, you know, Hu Womack, were the sort of faculty sponsors or liasons for GSSA. And so they were incredibly instrumental in creating a safe space for us and allowing us to program and talk about things and just that leadership there. Becky Hartsog at the student union was also someone who, these weren't people who I directly sought help from for me, but it was just, incredibly important to know that they were there, probably more than they realize I think. I need, at some point, need to sit down and write better letters to these people and say, 'You were so incredibly important!' [laughs]. And to be there. Perry Patterson, I had always had known of his being someone who was supportive of the community although I had him for freshman econ my last semester as a senior so I never had much of a connection to him as a faculty member. Sarah Watts, who was mentioned in the history discussion, she used to be a history professor here, her last semester was my first semester and she taught a freshman seminar on her book, which was on Teddy Roosevelt, it was called "Rough Rider in the White House," and it's all about gender identity that sort of contrived masculinity that could be associated with the faker Teddy Roosevelt who was all I'm gonna walk barefoot because that's what men do, that sort of boys scout culture and that was a good place to show me how to put my academic interests into something related to LGBT although I never took many Women's and Gender studies classes, like you're doing, so yeah. I think the punch line is that there were a whole litany of people who were incredibly instrumental who were just doing their jobs, probably is the way they would see it, and I didn't call upon them directly for my own need but I can't stress the importance of their being there enough. I mean had they not been there I think it would have been a very different place for me to exist here, just without the sort of luminaries around, basically.

Q: [29:57-30:46] Right. So then, what kind of role did they play?

A: Advocates and creators of safe space and fighting the good fight for students who needed that help more than I did. And yeah championing all of these causes that you heard about through the history of Wake Forest against adversarial forces in administration and student life and perhaps faculty, I've never heard, I've never felt uncomfortable around any faculty member around here at all, so, or at least my experience. Their presence of doing that tirelessly and probably very tiredly [laughs] was I don't know, I totally benefited from that indirectly and directly.

Q: [30:50- 32:06] So were there any particular opportunities to learn about LGBT issues and topics while you were at Wake?

A: Not that I was aware of directly I guess, at least not in the way it fit into my own schedule. I, those sorts of things would come up at meetings, I guess, at GSSA. Mary would reference a faculty member saying, 'Oh, she's great, she's on sabbatical but I wish she would offer this course again.' Angela Haddery, I know is a name of someone offering that sort of thing in sociology. I never met her, I guess I was aware, it was around, those sorts of things. I guess I was tangentially aware that those sorts of resources were being developed, kinda goes back to where do I fit into this history? The 04 to 08 period seemed to be the really rough, really nasty, really tough stuff had been fought out just before I came around and it wasn't everyone is comfortable and happy and okay yet, like maybe now or something, probably not now, but probably better

now... [Interviewer: Sure] My cohort of students were a little bit of a mixed bag. People came in expecting things to be normal, progressive, people came in with very different opinions, right and a mix in between.

Q: [32:08- 33:31] So was there diversity in the classroom in terms of racial, gender identities?

A: [Laughs] I used to be, I was a tour guide for most of the time [CG makes surprised noise] that I was here I guess probably starting my sophomore year on. [Laughs] And I remember that the way I used to describe it was [chuckles] that there was a diversity of thought and that there was more diversity than you'd think and think of all the different states that are here, and you know, we're not, we're mostly white but at least we think differently from what, I mean there was a lot of effort to boost that, to make it more than it is. [Interviewer: Still is [laughs]] Oh, absolutely! And that was, I don't mean to say that that is a bad way to describe things, to even want to rationalize that means that something good is going on, that you're identifying something as a problem and trying to speak truth to that and rectify that as a problem. But that was, there was not a whole lot of diversity. No, certainly not. But then you find little diversions from that. A person who has an experience that you had no idea about, you might have assumed otherwise just looking at them, you know whatever their racial background or gender background, or anything might be, so there's always exceptions to the rule.

Q: [33:33- 35:32] Right, definitely. Did you participate any sex education programs [WD: Ohhh!] and did those programs have information for LGBT?

A: [Laughs] One thing we used to do in GSSA every fall and I forget who we brought in to do this, but it was the same person over and over again so it became a sort of ritual, was they had I think we used to call it 'Safe Sex for the Same Sex,' was the name of the talk, it was sometime in late September, it would happen every fall, this person would come in from I think Triad Health so you know, AIDS, and other healthcare affiliate with the target minorities with gay communities would give a little sort of safe sex pep talk to the GSSA people and I sort of remember that because it was hysterical because it was just someone who was so not Wake Forest coming in and just you know, being brash and offensive and out there and throwing condoms and lube at everyone, and I think almost all of my condoms and lube as an undergrad came from this talk cause you know, you didn't want to go buy it or talk to someone about it or ask someone. You're just like, 'Okay, freebies, freebies!' and it was, I don't know why it was so well attended, but it was always well attended by people not in the GSSA community so I don't know, I almost feel like there was a course somewhere that forced more mainstream students to go to this as part of some sort of credit. I don't know if I'm making that up but it always seemed like it drew in people who had not been there before so there was a little bit of a gleeful shock value for those of us who were regulars at GSSA to watch a straight guy hear about all sorts of things that one could use in the bedroom, ticklers and dildos and just craziness and so there was that sex education, for sure, I guess. But it did its job, it served its purpose, it was professionally delivered, and that was certainly the only sex ed that I remember having at Wake.

Q: [35:34- 37:40] In terms of other kinds of places of support, were there any organizations or social spaces that sort of inadvertently became places for LGBT support?

A: Yeah I mean I think it goes back a little bit to this transition phase and how GSSA wasn't necessarily for LGBT, it was a bit more for the misfit. You know there are other circles like that that had their own dominant cultures within them, that LGBT students were part of but maybe didn't intersect with GSSA or something. I didn't do a whole lot of theater, but because I was a voice student, I did do a musical and an opera while I was here and that introduced me to a whole nother social circle that was certainly gay friendly but didn't come out on Wednesday nights at 7 for that purpose, so that was when GSSA met [chuckles]. And it, that was certainly of something that you run across and you think, 'Oh! If my dominant identity was theater then I would've had this.' BSU is a similar way and preschool in a similar way also, just getting to meet those progressive strands of campus ministry that identified a real problem with the dominant culture and fought against it loudly and fought against it bravely. That was certainly an inadvertent safe space, for me. I wasn't, even as a political science person, I wasn't politically active on campus so I don't know anything about how it was with campus Republicans and Democrats. I'm sure there was some discussion there and I wasn't ever in a Greek life fraternity so I don't about that as well but I think it would probably be the same. You sort of find these sort of pockets of people in different places. It was a period of sorting, that's what I should say, not a period of transition. It was a period of sorting out into different how this is all gonna fit in.

Q: [37:50- 38:51] [Pauses, looking through notes] Oh okay, so what was your stance on Greek life?

A: I never had a problem with it, and I probably didn't know that many people in it initially. It was actually the study abroad year that I met my first really good friends who were in sororities in particular, but also fraternities as well. And they were good people so I never, I guess I certainly, there were stereotypes that went with each of the frats and sororities at the time, could still be the same [CG agrees], but I, I guess I found positive examples from basically all of the different frats and sororities. I never really went to any parties, I guess it's not like I was participating in the culture enough to be offended by it [laughs], but I had lots of friends who were Kappa Kappa Gamma and Kai O and Deac and KD and Tri-Delt. So to me it was just another club, another group of people.

Q: [38:52- 40:53] Okay, and how did you see LGBTQ kind of relating to Greek life? Were you aware of any Greek people who were out?

A: There was a strand of people around, and like I said, I don't want to use names and things for privacy, but there was a strand of people who were around during my college era who were out but did not identify with GSSA. And so there was a whole stream of out gays who were fine with that and maybe even more flamboyant than I am or was and basically said, 'I'm not a misfit, and so I'm going to be the frat boy or I'm going to be the sorority girl or whatever,' and so I guess I was aware of that a little bit, but they almost seemed a sort of tokenistic or mascot-like to me. In particular there were a couple of gay gusy that I can think of, who I don't know very personally, or at all, but knew to be the sort of sorority mascots for a couple of the sororities. I think that's probably good, in a way, at least at the time, it was good because it put a face to a category and brought some communication about that. But it's probably not the best way to handle [laughs] that, certain tokens, or tokens, or that's how it read to me. Other than that, there's always been, or there's always been talk of sort of closeted frat boy scene. I'm sure it's the same with

sororities. Probably as the product of my being out the entire time that I was here, I assumed a lot of those people just stuck away from me [laughs], just steer clear for their own personal safety, I guess, for their own reasons. Not that I would have done any harm there, but I can totally understand how that, how someone like myself would've been maybe threatening to them.

Q: [40:56- 42:30] What was off-campus bar culture like?

A: Yeah, we were on the very beginning of this sort of gentrifying of downtown Winston-Salem. So while I was here like 6th and Vine was sort of the new thing and that was where the cool upperclassmen went because it was like, good wine, and I love 6th and Vine, I still go there every time I come back here. My senior year, Finnegan's Wake opened and that was part of that sort of now, what do they call it? The arts district or whatever you want to call it. Second, the Mellow Mushroom opened downtown too, so a lot of those things were opening and most of it has opened since I left, cause there wasn't a whole lot of going out as adults, I guess, as seniors. That's not related to gay bar culture at all. Gay bar culture, I wasn't directly exposed to a whole lot while I was here. GSSA, or through the auspices of GSSA, made an attempt to go to, I forget what it was called, but there were two different bars in Greensboro that we would go to. I think I went to each of them one time. One used to be called the Warehouse, the other used to be called the Sky Bar. There're just in downtown Greensboro. One was just this sort of a cocktail lounge, and the other was more of a club, dance club. So those were experiences I wouldn't have had otherwise. That's not my, my MO is not clubbing, it's always been more low-key bars anyway, so. Anyway, that's probably more about Winston-Salem shifting gay culture. That was certainly happening in the 10 years ago.

Q: [42:32- 44:06] Right, right. So you've kind of mentioned this, but did you date and were you in relationships or were your experiences more casual?

A: Yeah, I did date. I, like I said, Patrick...Hi Patrick, you're probably listening [laughs]. He'd be the kind of guy who would pull this up, I feel like, although we don't talk very regularly, we're still in communication, but he was sort of my first boyfriend and we dated on and off the first two years of undergrad until he started studying abroad and then I studied abroad and then it kind of ended. I had a couple other boyfriends at Wake, or while I was at Wake, but they were not Wake students. That was the only time I dated a Wake student, I think, yeah, it was the only time I dated a Wake student. The rest of the time, was just try to figure out how to be a gay male in the South and where do you meet other gay guys and it was right around the time that online picked up. There weren't smartphones, but there were websites that had, gay.com. I used that to meet other people that were in the region or something, so I think that's probably the same experience that most of my friends at Wake had in that same period. If they weren't on sort of the DL hook-up circuit, which I was not part of that, then they were probably looking to the broader community, either through going to bars or beginning to play around with this idea of websites and things like that.

Q: [44:07- 45:13] Right. So was it like the hookup culture that you were kind of trying to avoid by not dating Wake students?

A: No, no, no, there were not Wake students is the thing. It kinda goes back to the thing where I mentioned where the prevalent culture in GSSA or the prevalent identity in GSSA was not gay people, it was gay allies, you know, there really was a problem in numbers. You know, the student body back then was a little bit smaller than it is now. There were just not. Like I could count on, certainly less than 10 fingers, the number of out gay men that I knew of that were in any way sort of comfortable in their skin while I was here, that I knew about, right? There's always a couple of exceptions here and there that you don't know about, but mostly people know about each other. The rest of it was just closeted or not discussed on purpose, and so, yeah that was, yeah there just wasn't, there were not opportunities for dating on campus once I'd maxed out my one option [laughs].

Q: [45:17- 45:34] Sure, if you're uncomfortable, you know, you don't have to answer, but did you have sexually intimate relationships while at Wake?

A: Yeah, yeah. Probably in the way that college students do. I don't think I had a particularly unusual experience in that regard for my sexuality.

Q: [45:39- 46:23] Did your race or ethnicity affect your sexual encounters on campus?

A: Not that I'm aware of. Like I said, I'm a white male and that was the, is the dominant, race and so on campus in terms of numbers that was usually. There wasn't, there were a couple of students that were, I'm not sure if there was really, I can think of one example of a mixed race girl that was involved in GSSA but there wasn't, I don't know, once again, numbers. There wasn't diversity in that way for it even to begin to impact me.

Q: [46:24-46:26] So you mostly dated white men?

A: Yes, yes, yeah.

Q: [46:30- 50:44] So kind of catching up to now, what did you do after you left Wake Forest and do you feel like your experiences on campus as an LGBTQ identified person affect your life after college?

A: So I went to grad school right after I graduated in 2008, started a PhD program in political science at the University of Pittsburgh and spent five years at Pittsburgh with some studying abroad for my research as part of that, but you know mostly in Pittsburgh. And that experience was night and day from wake, in good and bad ways, but I mean probably mostly good ways, to be honest because Wake was a Southern, suburban, private school fairly isolated and Pittsburgh as a university is very urban, it's in the middle of the city, it's a very big city, certainly not in the south, is the antithesis of preppy. I mean it is gritty and grungy post-steel apocalypse [laughs]. I mean it's wonderful and I was just, I felt like my whole first year at Pitt I was just exhaling. It was the opposite of uptight, it was the opposite of everything I had been at Wake and it was just really good to give me that night and day. It was just healthy for me I think to see some of that diversity that I hadn't had, I mean Pitt's actually a fairly white city, but to at least give me different types of diversity that I hadn't, that I'd yearned for. I went to Wake, I guess I should back up, I went to Wake for financial reasons because of the scholarships. My grandparents went

here. My parents didn't go here, but I'm from the region, so it was a familiar option. My dream had been to go to sort of small ivy, New England, boutique school, of which I got into a couple and it just would have been really expensive and so I chose the pragmatic solution over the debt. I felt a lot, there was a bit of a latent frustration that I had made myself do this, in a way, because it was the smart choice and I got so much out of it and I love Wake Forest and I don't mean to speak bad about it at all, in that way, but it was always a bit of a regret that this probably wasn't the place that I would thrive of anywhere and so Pitt was a nice opportunity to kind of bring that full circle and you know be in urban environment, have the, I lived in sort of the gay-borhood of Pittsburgh, be exposed to that on a daily, regular basis, not have that be a thing at all in terms of my identity and so after I finished, after I finished my PhD at Pitt I went on the job market to get an academic job and found a job at a university at South Carolina, where I work now. And that was also sort of the 'really? You're going to now go back to the South since you've just like exhaled for the last five years? Do you really want to do this?' And yeah, I do. I mean I'm thrilled to be where I am and I guess it's been wonderful to give, I have given myself both sides of that coin because I think it's fully prepared me to be the person that I am now, which is certainly still confident, certainly still within my own skin on a personal level, but also seeing a wide variety of different experiences in life and feel comfortable putting on all these different hats in a context that the school I'm at now is extremely diverse in terms of racial background and student background and that is new and I certainly think that Wake Forest would not have prepared me to work there, but living in a different urban context certainly did. On the other hand, the rigor and professionalism of this university, of this place, is incredibly important to my professional abilities today also, so I'm really glad I had both experiences and I would have been sorely disappointed had I only had one.

Q: [50:45- 52:29] Right. Do you see yourself taking on sort of a mentor relationship then with the diversity of students at that school?

A: There's a part of me that yearns to do that, and there's still a part of me that is not, like I said before, I've sort of operated on the assumption that I became outed at the age of 18 so it's not like I've gone back in the closet but there's still a bit of navigating that professionally and how I want to fit in. The university I work at now has a gay student group similar to a GSSA. I have not been involved with it, although I know faculty who are and I would be interested in doing that as one of many things I'm interested in and so finding the right time to do that would be important to me, but yeah, for now it's almost, this afternoon at the panel when there was a question to the current students, 'what would you like professors to know?' I was like, 'Answer the question! Answer the question!' but they went with this whole 'what do you want the broader community to know about the LGBT' and I was like, 'no, no, no,' you know. It is ten years later for me and so I don't want to tokenize students who feel that they're comfortable and I don't know how one even offers, makes themselves available to mentor, initiates that sort of cause what I want to be, different scale, but I want to be the type of professor that someone looks back and says you know, is like a Mary Gerardy or Perry Patterson or someone who has a presence and is a known quantity. That's still my own thing to figure out how to do.

Q: [52:30- 55:37] Sure, so kind of coming full circle, probably our last question, how do you think the LGBTQ Alumni Conference will affect the alumni and students and also why did you choose to come to the conference?

A: I came to homecoming two years ago, it was my five year reunion, and it was the first fall I lived in South Carolina, so I hadn't been back to Wake Forest since. I said, 'It's in the area, I'll go back to see what's there.' And GSSA had their homecoming, or the center, had their homecoming in concert with GSSA and I met Angela and just was like, 'Wow this is just a really great resource you've had since I've been away, how awesome' and I just kind of put my email on some list and when I heard about this just part of me just said, 'yeah! I want to go check this out.' I haven't done a terribly good job with keeping up connections with the Wake Forest community. A lot of that was just, you know, Pitt was just such a release from Wake Forest that part of me just hasn't figured out how to put that back together again. But I just said, 'yeah, I'll come up here and give it a shot,' and that's when I put my name in a hat for this [interview], and this is my professor role more than anything, like if students need someone to help them then I will be there for them for that, more than I need to share my experience. But how this all fits into what I want this conference to be is, as I was sitting there thinking during the history session, if I could ask Mary Gerardy about when was the sea change, like what, she's been here a long time, like at what point did she say this is now getting better instead of getting worse, like at what point did she say, you know historically this is when things were better, or were obviously better, and that's probably not a question that any one person can answer. I think adding a center is part of that because it institutionalizes a commitment to this community and puts a face behind it and puts resources behind, puts an organization behind it, a curriculum behind it, and those are all incredibly important things to do. And so I hope that this conference is part of laying the foundation for that center's presence and for outreach and I don't know what that means exactly for you guys, but I am excited to see more about that and hear more about that because there is, I don't know a lot of people at this conference otherwise because there are not a lot of people here from my year, around my year just one other one, but it seems like there's a real thirst for this and a real need for this and listening to the history that was shared and you recording, a lot of the stories I'd heard before through GSSA when I was here and I was kind of remembering the 90s when they were being retold, the Wait Chapel marriage, Susan Parker and things like that, were sort of, are, what's the word, trailblazers. And I'm glad this is being institutionalized.

[Interviewer: Well, thank you. Interviewee: Sure].