

Kaitlyn Baum Oral History LGBTQIA+ Interview

Interviewer: Mckenzie Brooks

December 16, 2020

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MB: There we go. Okay. So hello, my name is Mckenzie Brooks. I am with Kaitlyn Baum, a current student at UW-Stout. This interview is being recorded for the WGS 205 LGBTQIA+ oral history project. Katie, thank you for meeting with me and contributing your story to the Stout archives.

KB: Yeah, I'm excited. [laughs]

00:00:33.470

MB: [laughs] Awesome. So, let's just start with like getting to know you a little bit more. So, do you want to talk about, like what year you are at Stout, what your major is?

KB: Okay. So, I just started, so I'm a freshman first semester going great. My major is video production, and I am from Minnesota so not exactly from Wisconsin, but that's okay because it's very close.

00:01:06.020

MB: What made you want to go into video prod- production?

KB: Okay so, I really like making people cry with the things that I make.

MB and KB: [laugh]

KB: So, it's like I think the best feeling is when I make something or when anyone- when anyone like makes anything really and it moves another person to tears because it's like this thing that they created isn't even real and I think that's like really cool. So, my ultimate goal is to make someone cry, either like happy tears or good tears. So yeah, that's why I joined video production.

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MB: You want to create something that evokes a really deep emotion within someone.

KB: Mhm.

MB: Oh, that's really cool. Why did you- what drew you to go to Stout?

KB: Well, I looked up what, like colleges around me had a video production major, uhm not a lot do [laughs]. And originally, I wasn't even thinking about Stout, like I applied for Augsburg, and I actually got accepted there. I was about to go there, but I figured I should at least have, like a backup plan because that was like the only college I wanted to go to so it's the only one I applied to, but I'm like *that's probably not smart*. So, there's like this chunk of like- like this week, I think in some month, November maybe, where all of the applications are free and so then I decided to apply for Stout because I saw that you had a video production major and I told myself that if I did get accepted then I had to go tour it because I haven't even like looked at it yet. I just looked up like *more colleges nearby* basically. And so, then I did get accepted after like a month. I completely forgot about it until I got the letter and I was so excited. So, then I of course I toured it and then when I toured it, I liked it a lot better than Augsburg. Like the vibe of it was so different because it was more of a college town rather than in Minneapolis, and it was more of what I was like looking for and they all seemed- like everyone seemed really cool and excited that I was there, which is weird, but it made me feel happy [laughs]. And so, then when I did tour it, I met with some professors from the video production thing and they gave like- I can't remember who it was, but one of them gave me a little tour of the place and told me about it and I don't know. It inspired me, I guess so, then I stayed [laughs].

MB: That's awesome!

00:03:55.500

MB: So, I know- so I know this about you because we've known each other for the majority of the semester basically. But you are part of the LGBTQ community. Do you want to talk about- a little bit about that experience? Maybe like how you define yourself?

KB: Okay so, I identify as bisexual so that is my [air quotes] title I guess, although it's kind of loose, I would think because it's like, to me it's pretty open. So, I'm okay with kind of whatever labels where it's like, *oh she's gay* and I'll be like *yeah, I am* or like any of that sort. And it's like- I don't know if this is going to really answer your question. But a part of me really kind of like where I found because like- like I went through this whole journey, mostly in middle school because all of my friends around me- they were coming out and so then it's like *I didn't even know that this was a thing* until my best friend came out as trans and it was kind of crazy because I was like *whoa* because I didn't even know what that meant. But he was kind of like so sad because he's like please- like would you still like me at all? I'm like, *yeah, of course I love you like you my best friend dude like I love you whatever*. So, then I did research. And uhm, I went through this period of figuring everything out kind of thing. There's like a long time where I like didn't have a label like *whatever I don't need, I don't know what I am*. But then by the time I got to like high school, I did so many different labels and it's kind of crazy because labels I feel like shouldn't be that important. But to some people it is, and some people it isn't, and I respect both. But it's also kind of crazy that people put so much importance on a label, just like

I sound like preachy now [laughs]. But like people go through a lot of stress about it, and I mean finding a label that best suits you can feel good and like validate- like validating. I don't know if that's word.

MB: You're good, you're good.

KB: Okay, but it's like really nice. But I don't know, I guess that's my ex- experience. Lots of fluidity like change is inevitable, so mine was like a butterfly, like a very slow cocoon kind of thing and now I'm a butterfly. That's my journey [laughs].

00:06:34.000

MB: [laughs] Can you talk about your experience with the LGBTQ community here at Stout? What that's kind of been like?

KB: So, I noticed that here, like at Stout, is a completely different place than like anywhere that I've ever been before, and it's kind of crazy. And I don't know if it's just Stout or if it's other college campuses, but the way that the world is- is like different because they're so open about all this stuff, which is crazy because like my middle school recently got in trouble for starting like a- like a LGBT like club. So, it's like so weird that now I'm going to a place where people in like everyday conversations or everyday life is like, *hey, what's your pronouns* or like, *hey, like this is my pronoun, nice to meet you*. I think that's crazy and it's so cool and I think it's like really awesome and it makes me so excited because it's like- it's- it feels like the one place where people really won't care about who you are as a person like obviously, they care about you, but they won't judge you for any of that. And so, I feel like Stout has been very- is a very inclusive place and I think it's pretty awesome.

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MB: So outside of the LGBTQ community, what has been your experiences with other communities? We are both in a sorority, so that might feel different than if you were with people who were also in the LGBTQ community or- what are those experiences with people who don't identify with you necessarily at Stout? Like, do you have conflicts with other people? Have you had bad experiences? Like just kind of- those are just kind of examples of what you could go with that.

KB: It's like I would say that there isn't much conflict with like different [air quotes] cliques based off sexuality or whatever because I feel like everyone is pretty chill with everyone, but there is one difference. And this is like not really serious, and I don't know if I should be serious, but the one did-

MB: No that's okay. [unclear] You can take it wherever you want.

KB: Okay cool. Because like the one major difference between the two is that we make so much gay jokes together, like when we're all together like that's all we joke about and so then there's like never knowing how far is too far with like your straight friends. It's always interesting, but I think it's really funny. I mean, I think that would be like the only difference because otherwise everyone is very loving and accepting. Like in this sorority that we're part of, and in the LGBT community, like all those communities are just so full of love.

MB: I'm really glad you've had that experience. I know a lot of people, especially who don't go to Stout, they haven't had those same- that same sense of like safety and security with people who don't- who are not in that community. So, I'm really glad that that's been your experience so far. That makes me happy because I want to be a part of a healthy community and be part of that love that I'm putting into that community. So, I'm glad that that's been your experience so far.

00:09:58.060

MB: Let's move on a little bit. So, do you know what kind of resources are available for the LGBTQ student- for LGBTQ students?

KB: I know there's the Qube. I haven't really talked to them at all. I've been wanting to. I've been wanting to go in and see if they had like little pins with pronouns on them. Like I- for some reason I think that's a thing, but I'm not exactly sure.

KB and MB: [laugh]

KB: But like, I haven't really talked to them, but I know where they're located. I passed them a lot. But yeah, I know there's that and also just regular like counselors or therapists on campus. But I don't know if there's anything else specific.

00:10:43.130

MB: [nods] No, I was just curious. Do you view these things as very accessible to you? Like if you felt that you needed support with an issue that you were- that you were going through, do you feel that you could easily access these resources?

KB: Mhm. The Qube is almost opened all the time. Every time I pass it. So, and there's such, like a great vibe from it. I think it's so like calm and like chill and I really appreciate that. So, it's like- it feels like I could just like walk in and be like *what's up I'm home* and everyone be like *oh my God! Yay! Katie's back!*

KB and MB: [laugh]

KB: Like I don't- that's how I imagine it. I picture them being really cool so like yeah- yes, I do think they're very accessible [laughs].

00:11:32.750

MB: So how has being a part of the LGBTQ community impacted your experience here at Stout, or has it like if you've had- how have you noticed it may or may not have impacted your experience?

KB: I don't think it impacted anything too much. Which I think in itself is a good thing because then it's like you know, like it's not a big deal anymore. I know my roommate; she also is a part of the LGBT community, she identifies is like the same as I do and so, it's like kind of funny, because that's a little stressful. Because when you find a roommate now, it's like I had to make sure that we're on the same page because I didn't want to live with someone who's going to hate me.

MB: [nods] Yeah!

KB: But I feel like Stout being kind of like a chill, like artsy college. My mom was probably like, [unclear]. Probably. But there's like there was like that was stressful because then I had to like come out to this stranger that I didn't even know because like I met her one time before we officially became roommates. We met at Noodles & Company and so the first time I ever saw in person and I'm like *look, like if we're going to live together, I need to know that we have like some, like, of the same like, I don't know I wouldn't want to say morals, but like same values, I guess*. And so, she's like kind of scared she's like *sure, okay* and so then like I came out to her and she's like *dude me, too* and I was like *oh my God*. So, we are like best friends now so that's great but that would be like the only thing that has impacted anything. So yeah [laughs].

MB: No, I couldn't imagine, like having to come out to a complete stranger. That would be extremely stressful.

KB: [nods] Mhm.

MB: I'm glad it went well for you. Really happy about that.

KB: Me too! [laughs]

00:13:35.650

MB: [laughs] So in your- let's move on to more of like faculty and actual classroom environments. I know with COVID right now, being in person with your classes, it's kind of like few and far between, but because your view production major, I believe you do have in person classes? Or like you have this semester?

KB: [nods] Mhm.

00:13:58.880

MB: Okay cool, so in your experience in person or even virtually that works too, how have Stout faculty fostered a safe environment for like all- for all students?

KB: I think it's just the fact that they acknowledge things that are happening. Like my English professor, he mentioned like the Black Lives Matter movement about like everything that happened over the summer. Which is kind of cool. And I think that made it feel [?] like a- especially a safe place because I feel like a lot of people would try to avoid that subject since it brings up so much like raw emotion from so many different people. And so, then the fact that they're like comfortable talking about this stuff, and like especially being on like the same- like the same side as everyone, kind of like- if that makes sense? Like they're like all positive and whatever about everything- I mean not everything is like a sad thing, but I think you know what I mean. [laughs]

MB: Yeah, I do. [?]

KB: But yeah, because I feel like if people- if people ignore things, then that makes you seem more compliant with everything. So, then it's just a lot better and more visible of acceptance when you talk about it, I guess.

00:15:21.230

MB: Yeah, so if I'm understanding correctly, you find that their- like some faculty- are much more open about these kinds of- what might be a [air quotes] hot button issue where some people would just avoid because they don't want to like make anyone upset, but because these- the faculty are bringing it up, it's like opening conversations between students, it's creating an environment where you feel safe enough to like bring up these issues or bring up your opinion. Is that kind of what you're saying?

KB: Yeah, because then it also I think, shows compassion for the students because they all say- they- they talk about this stuff as if it's like personal to us because it like it is for a lot of us and so, then I just- it shows that they're there for everyone by opening up this like conversation topics, by showing that those people who identify as like these like specific things about these stories, then then it's like it's- it's okay to like share that.

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MB: Definitely! So then within your classes, do you feel that you personally are represented, your sexuality, the LGBTQ community? Do you feel that those demographics kind of are being represented in your classes? Like, does that kind of make sense? Otherwise, I can explain it a little bit more.

KB: I think so. But I don't think it happens much. Because- I mean in classes you'll get questionnaires or something and it'll ask you for your like name and pronouns like there's-

there's that kind of stuff that comes up, but that's... kind of it. Because otherwise they like just- I don't know- I- I don't think it- any like aspect of a person is like pronounced enough to address class. If that makes sense? Like I don't know, they're more focused on being a teacher than focusing on, like specifics of students. And I think that that's a good thing, probably. I think that's good [laughs].

00:17:37.380

MB: [nods and laughs] And then within the class materials, do you find- I'm not sure exactly the exact classes you've taken, so maybe this might not be applicable, so if it's not, just let me know- but if you've taken any classes that discuss different groups of people or because you're a film major, if you have like talked about different film genres or famous film makers throughout your courses, have you ever noticed them specifically bringing up people or specific films that highlight issues about the LGBTQ community? Like does it ever come up with in coursework?

KB: I don't think so. From the classes that I've taken so far, which isn't much, it's only four. It hasn't come up at all, but maybe if it's like a different class with like a different focus. So yeah, I don't know. I don't know if I can say much about that.

MB: No, that's okay. I was just curious in case, like you hadn't had- if you had had any of those experiences yet, but you are very early in your coursework, so that can obviously change. Like you said, four classes- doesn't give it a huge amount of lot of room for that.

00:18:52.390

MB: But then now we're moving on to my final questions that I have for you, and then you can kind of like circle back and then ans- add anything else that you thought about throughout this time. But what or any- what? Hmm. I'm so sorry. So, what changes would you like to see at Stout in order to better your own experience or the experiences of others? Would there be anything that you would change? You just want to talk about that a little bit.

KB: I don't think I would change anything because the way that Stout goes- like I'm assuming this is about LGBT stuff?

MB: [nods] Yeah. [laughs]

KB: Okay. Okay yeah, because of like everything for that they've been doing is like great in my opinion so far. At least I haven't heard of any problems because the way that like dorms and housing works you can, like specifying it to fit your needs or like- with like- even in dorm rooms on the door when we get there, we had to write down our pronouns, even if it is like a girls hall or something, which I think is cool because it's like some kids can't share all this stuff out in the open at first because of like their parents, but I don't know, because Stout doesn't

pretty good job with all that stuff and promoting like the Qube and promoting all of this LGBT stuff out in like mainstream things.

00:20:27.420

MB: Yeah. Those are all the questions I have. Do you have any final comments that you want to touch on?

KB: I think there was one thing that I thought about. So, the- it was one of the very first few questions about kind of like the people, and if there's like any like conflicts I guess with the gays and other people [laughs].

MB: [Laughs].

KB: I don't know, but there is like one kind of like conflict, I guess. Where it's like you never know if it's OK to come out, you know? Because, even if like Stout super accepting, which I love and it's like feels very safe there, but at the same time it's like these individual people might not agree with like the school that they're going to. So, it's still like- you have better chances of having a better reaction, but there's still, like that fear that it might go bad.

00:21:29.540

MB: [Nods] yeah.

KB: Yeah.

00:21:32.660

MB: Have you ever been in that situation where you're not sure if it's a safe time to come out?

KB: [nods] Mhm. It's like if I'm meeting with a classmate to do like homework or something. Obviously, I'm not going to bring it up then, or even if the conversation does lead to it, because it's like I'm kind of in a weird position, because like if he doesn't- if like this person doesn't agree then this is going to be really awkward for the rest of the semester.

MB: [Nods] yeah.

KB: [nods] So.

00:22:04.090

MB: Are there any- are there any ways that you try to navigate that situation to see- any questions you ask or any kind of vibes you try to get from the person to see if it might be safe further down the line?

KB: I ask very broad questions or like still like what if scenarios, you know? To seem very like chill and see how they react from that. So, then it's like if I do a few of those and they seem pretty okay then that's usually good. But then if they react kind of like not too keen then, don't- don't- don't go any further. [laughs]

00:22:46.670

MB: [nods] yeah. No, that makes sense. You have to- it's sad that you can't always come out, but you also have to protect yourself and having that kind of negative reaction is not something that anybody wants or deserves, so completely understandable. How does that- and this is more of a personal question, so feel free to just brush it off, I'm okay with that- but how does that kind of like impact your mental health when you know it's not a safe situation to come out? Like does that impact you at all?

KB: A little bit because it's like I try to be 100% me all the time and I'm trying to get more open about that with like people that I don't know, because I'm trying to make friends [laughs]. So, it's like I'm trying to be like me and it's always really stressful when you have to like watch yourself like what I said before with like the in the LGBT community we made a lot of gay jokes so it's like weird because your- your sense of humor is kind of like built in like it's hard to suppress it because I feel like humor is such like a natural thing that we try to do. So, then it's like you're always constantly like on the edge like you have to make sure you don't say, like a gay joke or else they'll know and then it's stressful. [laughs] Yeah, I think I answered your question.

00:24:12.430

MB: Yeah. You did! Just a second. [mutes audio and talks off screen] Sorry, my dog must like sense something outside because she started barking, but those are all the questions that I have. Are there any final- final comments that you wanted to make?

KB: I don't think so. You're great! [thumbs up]

MB: [laughs] Thank you, you're too sweet. Well, thank you so much Katie. I'm going to stop the recording and thank you- thank you again for contributing your story to this project.

KB: Yeah.

END

00:24:29.920