

Madelyn Lisius Oral History LGBTQIA+ Interview

Interviewer: Grace Callander

December 16, 2020

00:00:00.000-00:21:19.424

START

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00:00:03.460

Grace Callander: And it's recording. Okay, so my name is Grace Callander, I go by she/her pronouns, and I am the interviewer.

00:00:13.510

Madelyn Lisius: My name is Madelyn Lisius, I go by she or they, and I'm going to be the interviewee.

GC: Okay.

ML: Gross word [laughs]

00:00:23.510

GC: I know I don't like it. So, my first question for you today is how old are you when you realized that you weren't straight?

00:00:36.370

ML: That's always been like kind of like a difficult thing for me to think about, just because I'm not sure. I- I want to say maybe around 8th grade, so like late middle school, I grew up with my brother, so I was more- always more like tomboyish but I still like loved playing with Barbies and stuff. I don't know. I just like always kind of- I didn't really care who was with who. My parents always raised me, *we don't care what you do, who you're with, what you like as long as you're a good person*. So, I never saw like anybody in same-sex relationships as like a negative. Unless I was like with my mom, but she's very- Not important.

GC: Oh my!

ML: So I would say probably 8th grade is when I started like actively looking at like girls and be like *oh wow, they're like really pretty*, but I don't think I like recognized that as a change in sexuality until my sophomore year. I want to say it was either my sophomore or my junior year of high school when I was like, *oh maybe I don't want to be these girls maybe I want be with these girls*.

GC: [laughs]

ML: I was like mhm. [laughs] But yeah, so I'd say between like 8th and like junior year-ish.

00:02:22.320

GC: Gotcha. Okay. So how old were you when you finally came out?

ML: Probably 16. So, like I was in show choir, which is like singing and dancing at the same time, and I would be like surrounded by all these girls, because I was on an all-girls team. And I was just like *wow, they're really pretty*. And then, I met one of my friends for the first time through show choir and she's lesbian and I was like *that's a thing* I was like *wow* and I was- I was with my- my ex-boyfriend at the time so I was like *well I can't really do anything about it because I'm kind of in a heterosexual relationship right now*. So, I just kind of like stepped into the identity of bisexual because that's like all I really knew at the time was there was like you are either gay or you were bisexual, or I knew about trans people and [unclear] so, I was like *oh okay*. So probably like 16 is when I was like *yeah, I'm bisexual, I think*. And like my parents didn't care. But then when I was 17, I came out as pansexual, because I found that to be a little bit more me than bi-sexuality was plus I liked the colors of the flag better.

00:03:58.190

GC: [laughs] You always have to look at the colored patterns

ML: I've got my flag right there and I was like it's pretty. I like the colors.

00:04:09.600

GC: Cool, yeah.

ML: [unclear]

GC: Okay. Cool. So, when you were starting to look for like different colleges and stuff, did you like ever look into how they treated their like LGBTQIA+ students?

ML: Not initially. I was more just looking for what I can do with my major because when I was looking for colleges, I was still in a heterosexual relationship, so I really didn't like care about it as much. I did notice that Eau Claire has like a drop-down menu on their home page (online) specifically for LGBT students and I was like, *oh, that's kind of cool*. But I didn't really like go out of my way to see anything for it, like when I initial- when I went to apply first Stout, I didn't like go and see if they had anything for like the queer community.

00:05:13.610

GC: Okay, so with that, have you ever looked into Stout's past with queer students?

ML: No, it never really like came up, I guess. Because- well like we talked about in your interview, I had never even heard about the conversion-

GC: Oh.

ML: -therapy thing I had never heard about that, so I was like *oh, okay*. I don't really- I don't know. And like I've only- this is only my second year so I haven't really heard anything like bad happening, so I didn't really like think about it. It never really came up.

00:05:57.050

GC: Gotcha. Yeah so, when coming to Stout did you ever utilize the different programs that we have for queer students? So, this could be like the Qube or the Out@Stout floor.

00:06:11.200

ML: I did. Yeah, I like you have said I saw the Qube at the- the orientation day and I was like *oh my gosh, these people are so fun, and they've got like pins for every pronoun, every flag-Flags* I had never even seen before, and I was like *this is really cool*. And then I initially joined the GSA (Gender Sexuality Alliance) because I was on the GSA in high school but I got busy, so I stopped going to meetings for that.

GC: Yeah.

ML: And I knew about the Out@Stout floor which I thought was really cool. My friend's college has a similar thing and that's where they live is on their like Out@Stout floor, but for that college.

GC: Okay.

ML: So, I knew it was a thing and I thought it was really cool but personally, I didn't use it- I just thought- or I know people who live on that floor, and I thought it was really neat that they had it. But I have gone to the Qube a couple of times I went to their Halloween party last year, I got- I get pins from there, I think it's really cool that they have those pins.

00:07:29.240

GC: Yeah,

ML: [unclear]

GC: No, I always get the like she/her ones I always like- sometimes they like- last year they had like matte ones.

ML: [nods]

GC: This year, I think or I think this year was the matte ones and last year was they had like the little flags around them.

ML: Yeah, and like I've got a giant one now and I'm like *okay this is cool*.

00:07:53.420

GC: Yeah, I sometimes like going in there just to get like some of their pamphlets that they have.

ML: Yeah, they're really cool!

GC: Can't remember what it was but like the Safe Space unicorn one, I really enjoyed that one.

ML: I really want to do Safe Space training. I was going to do it last year but with COVID it got shut down and I didn't know if they were still doing that but I really want to do Safe Space training. I think that's such- such a cool thing that they have.

GC: Yeah!

ML: And like I have, a magnet on the outside of my door that says, like friend of the Qube or something like that.

GC: Mhm.

ML: I just- those like little nods to the LGBT community that I see around campus like in my- the office that I work at, on my professors doors, like just seeing that like makes me feel safe. So that's really cool. So, I do. I really like the Qube,

00:08:52.550

GC: Yeah! The Qube is great! So, going into that one though, did you feel like Stout was a welcoming environment for you when you first came here?

ML: Yeah! I wasn't in a relationship when I got here, but I had- after I first came out my boyfriend and I broke up and then I had 2-ish girlfriends-ish. So, I had experience with girls, and I was really excited about that, and I was like *I was going to go to college and like get a real girlfriend* and I was so pumped, and I was like- and like *Stout super cool about it* and- and then I got a boyfriend. [laughs]

GC: [laughs]

ML: Now I'm with him, but he's super supportive of everything, which is really cool. And so, like just going into Stout, I felt really confident and really comfortable in my sexuality, especially after like meeting with professors. And just- like they- one of my professors had no like, no tolerance for, hate anything.

GC: Yeah.

ML: And so, I felt really comfortable with the teachers and the staff and just- and I didn't even know that housing went- was like really close with the Qube until you had said something. So, like that's really cool that they take that into account because, you know, make everyone feel safe. So-

GC: Yeah!

ML: Yeah, I- I really felt good coming to Stout.

00:10:29.870

GC: Yeah, I always feel like when you see like on the syllabus like *I don't tolerate any hate in here* and I'm like- it always like just makes me feel a little bit better about that class.

ML: Yeah, I'm like when professors have like their pronouns in their like email tag-

GC: Yeah

ML: -it's like *you know what's up*.

GC: I was so excited when I saw that Canvas now has that. Especially-

ML: Yes, I think so cool.

GC: Especially with like everything like going like really online.

ML: [nods] Mhm.

GC: I always think like that's really nice.

ML: Especially for like our discussion posts like when you refer to someone like, you can be able to see what their pronouns are, which I think is really cool. I mean, I don't personally have mine up on canvas just because I got stuck between *do I pick she/her, or do I pick they/them? I don't know, so I'm not going to pick either of them*.

00:11:30.630

GC: Yeah, I feel like that's like the next like update for it.

ML: [nods] Mhm.

GC: Because yeah, I feel like at least like Canvas like higher ups I'm sure they don't know all that because they're like focusing on like school.

ML: Right! And I mean at least they have it.

GC: Yeah.

ML: Like that's really awesome.

00:11:49.220

GC: Cool! Moving on to the next question do you feel comfortable sharing your identity with those on campus?

ML: [nods] Mhm. Yeah, I'm really open about it. My friends can- sometimes think I'm too open about my sexuality. I'm all- like all of my friends are like bisexual, gay, lesbian, this, that and the other thing- I think I have like maybe one straight friend and she's not even like that straight, she's like questioning. But I'll like say something like *wow, girls are so pretty* and my friend goes *you're literally engaged to a man*.

GC: Yeah!

ML: Yeah, you know...

GC: I know that's how I feel like.

ML: That statement comes up so often in my friend group. I'll just be like *wow girls*, and they're like *you're engaged to cis het (cis heterosexual) man*. You know it's still there.

00:12:58.500

GC: I can still look.

ML: Yeah! And so, it's just really- I feel super comfortable and especially like having Stout be so comfortable with me, I've definitely like opened up more because like in high school, I definitely wasn't as open about it or even as comfortable but like just having Stout being a really welcoming place has really helped me welcome not only others but myself as well. So, I think that's really cool.

00:13:33.630

GC: Yeah, no, I definitely like see that within like my friend group even because yeah, we're all like gay, lesbian, we have like two straight friends but like they're also our only other friends. So, I was kind of like wonder I'm like. What is it like to do is be like straight on campus and like just have like purely kind of like straight friends almost.

ML: Yeah, I could never. Where's the flavor? [laughs]

GC: Yeah. [laughs]

ML: Nothing against straight people.

00:14:04.771

GC: No, no! It's just like it feels like such like a different way of life almost.

ML: It feels more genuine which-

GC: Yeah, I could see that.

ML: -obviously, I love my boyfriend. He's very straight, but he's also really comfortable in the fact that he is a straight man, so he pushes those boundaries of being like more on the feminine side or really like not toxic masculinity.

00:14:38.043

GC: Yeah!

ML: So, like it's- I'm not saying like straight people aren't genuine obviously but having like friends who are comfortable with themselves makes me feel comfortable and it's just it's an overall really good experience.

00:14:54.240

GC: Yeah, I also think like having friends that are like comfortable with your identity because like I've definitely had like classmates and coworkers who aren't like comfortable with them. For like whatever their reasons are and that just kind of makes it like harder to be around them because, like you know, like that like you're just living your life how you want to and need to and you know that they disapprove of it.

ML: Yeah, like it's difficult to feel comfortable in your own skin if people aren't comfortable with you. And like Stout, being so accepting has helped my friends become their better selves, which makes me go *oh, you know they're living their best life I can, too*. Like my friend Andi has changed their sexuality like back and forth all last year.

GC: Mhm.

ML: And like now they're finally comfortable with who they are, and Stout has allowed them to change their name, so they don't have to go by their deadname that makes them feel uncomfortable. They've allowed them to use they/them pronouns. They've allowed them to, you know, fly their nonbinary and lesbian flags in their room without people you know, going, *hey, you can't have that.*

GC: Yeah.

ML: It's a- it's really good. I really like it here when it comes to helping not only the LGBT community, but like any sort of minority like there's no visible, I guess hate. I mean there's always going to be like people, that are you know but Stout isn't, and I think that's really cool.

00:16:46.190

GC: Yeah, no. I definitely love how, like accessible it is to like do all that stuff like change like your name, you're like preferred name like you can even change your last name on there, too. But I know it can be really comforting for some people like I've helped a handful of residents like navigate that process and it's just super simple, too.

ML: Yeah, and like that's so- that's so cool because most things you know you don't hear about it until it's like, *oh, I wish I could have done that.*

GC: Yeah.

ML: Stout makes it known: *hey, these are things you can do.* And you know, if you- you have like advisors and stuff, and they'll the advisors have access to that too, and so they can be like, *hey, I you know stout has a thing, I don't know if you've heard about it,* and they really like they really advertise it very well and [its] very comforting, which I think is really nice.

00:17:47.250

GC: Yeah, okay so with that, we'll go to the final question. We've touched on this quite a few times, but do you feel safe and comfortable at Stout?

ML: Yes, there was- there was one time where there was a guy standing outside Heritage (Hall) with a fold out table and a Trump flag. I don't know what he was doing, I didn't know what was going on, but I saw him, and I was like *uh oh*, but I didn't think it was like Stout itself.

00:18:22.650

GC: Yeah!

ML: Because I knew- I know Stout is really good about everything. So I do feel safe here, like that was like a one-time thing and then one of the- you know about like the church house.



GC: Yeah.

ML: My friend- when I first got here the first week, they had a big sign that said *fresh women welcome*.

GC: Yep.

ML: I was like [scratches head] [unclear]

00:18:58.500

GC: Yeah, they do that like every year and I'm like *eh! That makes me uncomfortable*, but then I liked the sorority where they had the dad sign up- at least they had one my year when I moved in, and they're like, *hot dads welcome*. Which I'm like I like, I feel bad because I kind of like that one more, but they're both equally wrong.

00:19:22.720

ML: Yeah! It's- like it's different with like the church house, because they're not necessarily like a fraternity, so you know, that's their public prop- or that's their personal property. I mean, it made me feel uncomfortable, but it wasn't on campus. But I feel like if the sorority is doing something, like Stout doesn't have a big sorority fraternity.

GC: Yeah.

ML: Like they they don't and I actually really like that because I don't feel pressured to be a part of something that I don't want to be.

GC: Yeah.

ML: I always thought that was really good, but like this isn't a school for that. Like if you want a fraternity, sorority school, you go to Madison.

00:20:08.040

GC: Yeah, definitely!

ML: Where they've got like the huge houses, so I really like that it wasn't a big thing here, but if they're going to do that. They're not going to get us like anymore funding than they already do.

00:20:24.870

GC: Yeah, no.

ML: I feel like just like very small instances where I felt like uncomfortable, but it wasn't anything that had to do with like my sexuality. It was just like, and they weren't even on campus except for like that one guy with the Trump flag and he wasn't like actively hating anyone, just seeing that I was like *uh oh*.

00:20:49.062

GC: Yeah, it's just like what it is.

ML: But as of Stout, no nothing like has made me feel unsafe or uncomfortable, which I think is super cool.

00:21:02.820

GC: Yeah, no, definitely! Okay, well that is all the questions I have for today.

ML: Was that 20 minutes?

00:21:09.878

GC: That was 21 minutes.

ML: Yes!

GC: We got one. I'd probably start to stop this recording.

ML and GC: [laugh]

END

00:21:19.424