

Brian T. Jacobs, '02
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
SpeakOut
November 13, 2019
Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[NICHOLAS X.]

WOO: My name is Nicholas Woo. I am a '20 here at Dartmouth [College], and I am in the Ticknor Room of the Rauner [Special Collections] Library. It is Wednesday, November 13th, 2019, 2 p.m.

If you wouldn't mind, could you introduce yourself and your name, year and where you are, where you're at right now?

JACOBS: Okay. I'm Brian [T.] Jacobs, Class of 2002, and I am currently in Lawrenceville, New Jersey.

WOO: Thank you. So the way I kind of like to begin these interviews is to kind of start off with your beginnings and where you—your childhood and where you came from. Could you tell me about—yeah, could you tell me a little about your childhood and your folks?

JACOBS: Sure. So I grew up in Bridgewater [Township], New Jersey, which is about an hour north of Lawrenceville. I was born there in 1980. Have an older brother. He's four years older than I am. My father worked for AT&T [Inc.], which then went to NCR [Corporation] and then became Lucent Technologies [Inc.]. My mother was a nurse for a group of endocrinologists. And, yeah, a really nice childhood, living in a suburban neighborhood. Had lots of good friends in the area. I remember riding my bike all over the place, and it was a good childhood, I would say.

WOO: Could you tell me more about your friends and how—how you became friends with them or where—where you would find a community as a child?

JACOBS: Sure. So actually, my best friend lived right across the street from me. And so that was really convenient. I don't really remember exactly how we became friends. Obviously, we went to school together. We were the same age. And so, yeah, we just—you know, it was the days where you parents

would just send you outside to play, and so we would play outside all the time. Yeah, we—we were really close friends growing up.

WOO: What type of activities or games would you play together?

JACOBS: Oh, anything from, you know, playing on the swing set outside to we used to put on, like, puppet shows. I remember, like, digging and, like, just digging by the bushes and lots of—lots of very imaginative stuff. We used to play with Legos all the time. It's funny. Well, he's also gay, and so I think—you know, he and I came out to each other probably maybe when we were fifteen or sixteen. He actually moved away in—yeah, he moved away when I was thirteen. It was right before I had my Bar Mitzvah, I remember.

And he had moved away, and his parents were going to send him back so that he could come to my Bar Mitzvah. So he moved out to Minnesota, which was tough, but we would kind of—we would visit each other every once in a while, so I got out to Minnesota. I got to go to the Mall of America and, you know, traveled by myself when I was probably about fourteen or fifteen, which was kind of cool. But yeah, so he and I were—were really, really close. It was—it was hard, kind of, for him to move away. You know, I developed other friendships and—and, you know, we still—we keep in touch. He still remembers my birthday every year.

WOO: Aww!

JACOBS: [cross-talk] He still wishes me happy birthday every year, so—yeah. It's nice.

WOO: And what was his name?

JACOBS: His name is Marty.

WOO: Marty.

JACOBS: Yeah.

WOO: How about in school—how was—how did—how—how was school like as a kid out at—and—and what type of things did you do? What type of things you remember in school.

JACOBS: I remember being a really anxious child, I think.

WOO: Anxious!

JACOBS: Yeah, anxious. Like, I always wanted to do everything perfectly, and I always wanted to get everything right, and when I didn't, I remember that upsetting me a lot when I was little. I guess one of my—one of my earlier memories—well, I have some good—I mean, in kindergarten I remember, like,—

WOO: Tell me. Yeah.

JACOBS: —bringing my stuffed animals. And I remember one day when this, one of my friends had brought in her pound puppy and I brought my pound puppy, and bonding over that, I still remember. But I remember in fourth grade—third or fourth grade, we were supposed to have a—a signed permission slip from our parents, and I remember forgetting that, breaking down and crying to my parents to bring the permission slip in. And so, yeah, I was always—you know, even if I, you know, accidentally did something wrong and got called out for it, it would—I remember just feeling embarrassed and not wanting to—to do anything wrong, so—I was always a very astute student, always tried very hard.

I always wanted to please not just the teacher but really myself. I was really—I—my parents never put any pressure on me as a student. I really put all that—that pressure, I'd say, but more, maybe more so motivation on myself to—to try and succeed.

WOO: Why do you think—why do you think you were like that?
[Chuckles.]

JACOBS: That's a good question. I don't know. I think—

WOO: In retrospect.

JACOBS: I—yeah, in retrospect, I—well, I—I mean, to some degree it's good to—to have a certain amount of anxiety and a certain

amount of—and put a certain amount of pressure on yourself because—

WOO: For sure.

JACOBS: [cross-talk] that's how you become successful. And so I think that that—I think that I was successful because of that. You know, I—I went on to get really good grades up at Dartmouth. Went to Princeton [University] for grad school. So I've always been, you know, trying to do my best.

WOO: Exactly.

JACOBS: So I think that it—yeah, it probably just stemmed from the desire to—to succeed and—and make myself happy and make others happy.

WOO: And at this time, did you feel like you—did you feel like you kind of fit in with—fit in with everyone and kind of just like go under the radar, or were there—

JACOBS: Yeah.

WOO: Yeah.

JACOBS: I—I think growing up, I was always—my group of friends, we were always kind of the nice and smart kids.

WOO: Okay. [Chuckles.]

JACOBS: So, yeah, if I—if I look at, you know, all my good friends growing up, we all went off to good schools,—we all went off and got good jobs. It was kind of—you know, that—that was the group of kids that I—that I hung around with, for the most part, I would say.

WOO: Okay. And did you—was this kind of the same throughout—from, like, kindergarten through twelfth grade, or—or—how do you see things—how did you see things shift or transition from, like, grade school to middle school to high school?

JACOBS: Yeah. I would say it—it pretty much stayed the same. I think—you know, I had a good friend growing up, and after Marty moved away to Minnesota, this other friend and I—his

name is Chris—became really close friends and hung out all the time. He also lived down the road, so I would bike to his house, he would bike to my house. We would go to Wildwood [New Jersey] together with his father, I remember, over the summers and go on all the rides together. We played Monopoly, like, every single day.

So then when we got to high school, I think he and I kind of picked different groups of friends, and so I kind of stuck with the—you know, the good kids and the—the ones who worked really hard in class and all that.

He went kind of with the—the cool kids. And so, yeah, I think that that—that kind of separated us a little bit as far as friends go. So I was—I was the kind of kid who in high school had, gosh, never—never had a drink, never smoked a cigarette—never done any of that. That was kind of something I would never think of, so that was kind of my group of friends.

WOO: And when you kind of split apart with Marty, how—how did that affect you? Did it—or did it affect you at all?

JACOBS: I think it was hard. I think it was a kind of feeling of loss. I had lost,—you know, my—my best friend. And even though, you know, we could keep in touch, this was before the days of FaceTime and—and e-mail and all that, so it was harder to keep in touch. He and I would write each other letters, I remember, just, you know, telling each other about what was going on in our lives, and so it was nice, but yet I definitely felt a—kind of a sense of having lost my best friend, which was hard.

WOO: For sure. You mentioned that you—you came out to each other at—was it fifteen?

JACOBS: It must have been around then, I think. So he came out to me first.

WOO: Yeah. Could you tell me about that?

JACOBS: I think maybe—it was probably—it was probably easier, in some ways, for him because he had moved off to a different place, made new friends. They didn't really know him since

he was a child, and so I think he had an easier time coming out. He was also really involved in theater.

And, you know, his friends there were much more accepting. So I think—I remember when I went out to—to Minnesota one time—he had come out as gay, and we were sitting I think on a playground with his friends at night. It must have been, like,—it must have been fifteen or sixteen—maybe a little—probably about sixteen, because I think his friends were driving. And I remember—I think one of them asked me, “Are you gay?” He asked it to me, and I—I said, “Well, I’m bi.”

JACOBS: Because at that point I wasn’t really ready to—to fully come out. So that was—that was kind of my first coming out. But then I think soon after, I told him that I was gay.

WOO: How—how—did—how did your family find out about you being gay?

JACOBS: So—well, I came out when I was seventeen. And so I had had kind of—I—I dated a couple of guys, or maybe, I think actually one guy at the time. And I remember he was over my house, and my mother said to me, “Make sure you keep the door open.”

And so I knew that my mother had understood what was going on, but we had never spoken really about it. And so unfortunately my father passed away when I was seventeen, and so I never got to come out to him. His brother—his brother is gay. And so my uncle kind of was the first in the family to come out and made it a lot easier for me to come out. But when I did come out to my mother, she was awesome, really, you know, just reminded me how much she loved me.

I think that I was the one crying just because I was—you know,—I had amazing parents, but—but I think there’s just always this fear—kind of with accepting yourself, with changing how other people see you. And so I—I never thought in a million years that my mom would say that she didn’t love me anymore or anything like that. I think it was just—this whole—this weight that had been—that had been weighing on me for years was finally being lifted and, like,

maybe it was just the catharsis of that that—that made me, you know, just—because I just remember crying, sitting there with her and telling her that I was gay. And then maybe a little bit later—it could have been a couple of months later, I remember telling my brother.

And so it was when I was at Dartmouth, so I must have been eighteen at the time, when I—maybe it was home for Thanksgiving break, and I remember sitting on the couch, and I said to my brother—I said, “Scott, I—I want to talk to you about something.”

And he knew it was coming, because he says to me—he goes, “I have to go get a drink.” And so he went to get a drink, and I told him, and he just, you know, was—was great about it, and again told me how much he loved me and supported me and—

So, yeah, I was—I was very fortunate as far as that goes, in having a supportive family. There—there was one kid in my high school. His name was Bryan as well, B-r-y-a-n—and he came out, and he was actually—so he was kicked out of his house by his parents, by his mother. I think he only lived with his mother at the time.

And—so that was really tough. And he wound up moving I think up to Connecticut or something with some guy that he had met. It was—it was a really tough situation for him. he had to leave high school.

WOO: Oh, wow.

JACOBS: And he and I were kind of friends. And he was probably—maybe one of the first people that I told that I was gay. And he and I would talk, and we kept in touch a little bit. We kind of fell out of touch, I guess, maybe after college or so. I think he went off to become a police officer.

But, yeah, so it—it was definitely a—a big difference between his experience coming out and getting kicked out of his house and my experience coming out, being so accepted by everybody in my family.

WOO: For sure.

So would you say that your—your sexuality and your identity as a gay man was—do you think it was just a component of you, growing up, or do you think it was kind of—or do you think it was integral to shaping your childhood—your childhood identity?

JACOBS: That's a good question. I think—I think growing up, there was always this feeling that I was different, and I think really young, I wasn't really able to pinpoint what that was. I do remember, like, even at a young age, going through, like, my mom's magazines and seeing, like, a shirtless guy in there as being some sort of attractive there and remembering that attraction. So I always knew there was something a little different. You know, I dated girls. I had a girlfriend through middle school. Had no physical interest in her, but—but, you know, really got along well with her as a friend.

And the same thing in high school. When I was I guess fourteen, I dated actually two senior girls, so two eighteen-year-olds. And, again, really, you know, got along great with them, but the second one whom I dated—we were really close, and I loved her. I really did but, you know, had really no physical attraction to her, which put a strain on our relationship.

And so—yeah, so she was the—the last girl that I dated.

WOO: And how did they react to—

JACOBS: So—well, she was a very, very religious—and so I did come out to her, because she had gone off to college after, and we were going to maybe stay together, and so I realized, you know, *I don't want to string her along anymore*. And so I did. I came out to her. And it was hard because her reaction was pretty much like, well, she was so upset because then she was worried that I was going to go to hell. So that was rough.

And we didn't really keep in touch much after that, so I don't know where life has brought her. She was really, you know, a wonderful person, really sweet. But, yeah, we didn't really keep in touch after that.

WOO: Right.

You mentioned that you were Jewish and that you—you had your Bar Mitzvah as well. How do you think your Jewish identity shaped your childhood, and in what ways did your Jewish identity intersect with your queer identity?

JACOBS: Yeah. That's a good question. So I think growing up, it really—I didn't see much intersection between my—my gay identity and my Jewish identity.

And I think—I'd say growing up, I—I felt different also because of the fact that I was Jewish. I think when I was in elementary school, I still remember there being Christmas trees in school and feeling kind of I'd say kind of out of place, myself. Like, *This is not part of me. I don't belong here.*

And so in addition to being gay and feeling that way, I was also feeling that way because of my being Jewish. I think—I guess things got a little bit more progressive the older I got, so, you know, I don't think I felt as much different when I was in high school, probably.

And it's interesting that you ask about the intersection, because I—I kind of stopped going to temple pretty much after I guess—after high school, really after—after my father passed away, we didn't go much. And then the rabbi at Dartmouth at the time, Rabbi [Edward] Boraz, came up with this group of—of—it was made for Jewish students who kind of had fallen out of touch with Judaism.

And so I decided, *You know what? Lemme give it a shot.* And so a friend of mine, who was also Jewish and hadn't really, you know, been to temple in a long time or done anything with Judaism—we went, and—and we were going around the table first, asking, you know, why we had kind of lost touch. I talked about being gay and how, you know, I felt like religion in many ways kind of preaches against homosexuality.

And so what the rabbi said to me—he said, “You know, the first thing that comes away before any of that is, is God says that people”—something like people need to find love and be

happy, and so it was—it was just—I really felt, I guess, so accepted in that moment. And I still remember, you know, sitting around that table with him and—and feeling, like, *Yeah, God—God still loves you, no matter whom you love.*

And that was a really—it was really a—a special time, and I then started going to Shabbat services on campus. I would go to the Shabbat dinners, and it was just a—it was really nice. I really have good memories of those.

WOO: How involved were you with the—the Roth Center [for Jewish Life] here on campus?

JACOBS: So I wasn't super involved, but it was mostly on Shabbat. I would go for the dinners and for the services.

WOO: Mm-hm.

All right, think this is a good—good transition to kind of transition to your beginnings at Dartmouth.

JACOBS: Mm-hm.

WOO: Could you kind of navigate to me how, starting with freshman year—what were some key moments that you kind of remember that shaped your time here?

JACOBS: So I'd say—I remember just really making friends at the beginning. So this was the years of—of AOL [American Online] and—and AOL Instant Messenger, and I remember chatting with a lot of people before getting to Dartmouth.

So I kind of had a—a few friends that, you know, I had made before even matriculating. And so that was for me kind of the most diverse group of friends that I'd had up to that point. And I think that was really cool.

WOO: Which dorm were you in freshman year?

JACOBS: I was in the Gold Coast [Cluster]—

WOO: You were in the Gold Coast.

JACOBS: —freshman year.

WOO: Do you—did you make friends with people on your floor?
Like, dorm mates?

JACOBS: Not really, no. I—I had a roommate my freshman year. He
was a nice guy. Kind of messy.

WOO: [Chuckles.]

JACOBS: And so we had a two- —we had a two-room double, which
was nice. I mean, his room was messy, and he didn't have to
mess my room up, but it was my first time living with
somebody else.

I think that that was also a little uncomfortable, just because I
was just starting to come out—

WOO: Right.

JACOBS: —Here I am living, like, in very close proximity to a straight
guy. So, yeah, this was definitely before the time that I would
have felt comfortable, you know, saying, “Hey, I’m gay. I
want a single” or “I want to live with somebody that I know is
accepting” and all that.

I mean, he was great. He wound up being fine. But, yeah,
that was—it was just an interesting experience living with
somebody that closely for the first time.

WOO: For sure.

JACOBS: Other things that I guess shaped my—my—my freshman
year: so a friend of mine and I actually—we created the GSA
[Gay Straight Alliance] together at Dartmouth—because
there was the [Dartmouth] Rainbow Alliance, is what it was
called at the time, I believe.

And so we had a lot of straight friends that were also
interested in getting involved, and there was really no place
for them to go, and so we created the GSA, and I’m pretty
sure this was my freshman year. And I—I remember I made
the website for the GSA, and we won an award from Collis
[Center for Student Involvement] for the website. And it was,

like, all of a sudden this, you know, group that kind of came from nothing got a little bit of anonymity because of that. Not anonymity. Became a little famous because of that.

And so that was—that was exciting, I guess. And, yeah, it was—freshman year was just really interesting because I had decided to—to come out at Dartmouth. I decided that, you know, *I'm meeting all these new people. They know nothing about me, and so they have no preconceived notions. I might as well just start off, you know, telling them that I'm gay, and that way, it's just all out there. I don't have to worry about coming out later on.*

Because I think that for me, that was one of the difficult parts with my—my friends back at home, because I never really came out to most of my friends. It was kind of—it felt awkward because they had known me since, you know, were really little. We had grown up together. I'd had girlfriends.

And so I felt like I was, you know, going to be a different person, and so I—I never really did come out to them and—and lost touch with a lot of them after—after high school, you know, we're I guess Facebook friends now, so obviously they know I'm gay because there are plenty of pictures of me and my husband and my kids.

But, yeah, that—I never really had that conversation with them. So when I got to Dartmouth, I decided, you know, to be very out, very proud, and that way, I wouldn't have to worry about being in the closet and coming out of the closet anymore.

WOO: And what was it like coming out in the 2000s? Did you—was it, like, something you had to come out multiple times to everyone you met, or was it kind of, like, a tight-knit enough community where just everyone knew?

JACOBS: I think [chuckles] it's maybe not much different than it was today. I think I had to come out pretty often. Obviously, once people, you know,—friends of friends would know I was gay and things like that, but I—I think I probably came out a lot. I feel like I still nowadays—you know, I'm a teacher. I have a lot of parents that I meet, and I often am coming out to them

because often they'll ask, you know, "Oh, what does your wife do?" and things like that. And so I say, "Well, my husband does"—you know, whatever. So I feel like I'm still coming out, you know, very often.

WOO: For sure.

Could you tell me more about the programming you did in—in GSA?

JACOBS: That's a good question. I don't remember a lot of the programming that we did. You know, I remember having meetings,—getting people together. I remember—one programming thing that I do remember was when Vox Clamantis [sic; Voces Clamantium] which was—I don't know if they're still in existence—one of the more religious clubs had brought an ex-gay to campus—Yvette [Cantu] Schneider, and I remember just how horrible that whole experience felt. And I recorded her whole speech, and I remember using it as part of my—one of my music projects. I was doing one of the computer music classes, and so I used her voice as part of—as part of this project that I was doing. But I do remember how—how divisive that—that was.

I remember the—the president of Vox Clamantis getting up and—and crying in front of the whole audience at the end, because of the booing and how she really thought she was doing something good. And, yeah, I actually—before our interview, I was, you know, thinking back at my experiences there, and so I looked up Yvette Schneider, who was an ex-gay, worked for the American Family Association, and she is now an ex-ex-gay.

JACOBS: So I felt a little vindicated, like she has finally come to her senses and is—is no longer kind of spreading that kind of hatred. But I do remember sitting down with whoever was the—the director of student clubs at the time in Collis Center and just saying how—how hurtful it was to me that basically my tuition dollars were in part being used to bring somebody on campus saying that I was, you know, wrong or bad for being who I was. And, you know, at the time, like, I think obviously the freedom of speech and, you know, "this is the kind of campus where we want to promote different kinds of ideas" was used as—as kind of her defense.

But I just remember how—how upsetting that was. I assume—I think I wrote something in *The*—in *The Dartmouth* at the time or—responded to somebody who had written something. So I think maybe that's when I started becoming more and more I guess politically active in supported of LGBTQ+ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, plus] rights.

WOO: Do you remember whether—was this something that you felt or just you felt, or did the commu- —did the queer community on campus kind of organize around that as well?

JACOBS: Oh, I think the whole—yeah, I think the queer community felt really upset. I remember there were two girls who got up and started making out in the middle of the audience, as a kind of protest to this. And I think—I think that Vox Clamantis was expecting kind of a small turnout, like, you know, this little club gathering kind of thing, and it turned out to be—they had to move it to Collis Common Ground because there were so many people that wanted to come, because I think originally they were going to do it maybe in Dartmouth Hall, if I remember correctly, and there was kind of a limited number of seats, and we all wanted to be there. We all wanted to show up to protest.

And so—so this—you know, I think whoever was president of Vox Clamantis at the time thought this was going to be, you know, just a small event and not ruffle as many feathers, and it—it actually ruffled a lot of feathers, and there were a lot of people that showed up in support of the LGBT community, so, you know, for 2000—I think it was in 2000—for 2000 that was not so bad.

WOO: Mm-hm.

Would you say the GSA here on campus was more of, like, a—like an affinity community support group or, like, an activist group or more of a—or like a social group? How—how would you—how would you characterize the club—

JACOBS: Yeah.

WOO: —during your time here?

JACOBS: That's a good question. In all honesty—I can't remember a lot of what we did. I remember, like, big things that we did, so for example, we went to the [Millennium] March on Washington in 2000. And so I feel like—I'm sure that was done in tandem with—with the Rainbow Alliance.

WOO: Yes.

JACOBS: But as far as just like the day-to-day life, I—I don't remember huge things. I remember meetings and, you know, gathering and talking about things. I don't remember it being hugely, like, social. I don't remember. I think we actually did a dance, if I remember, as well, in the basement of Collis at some point. I kind of remember that. That was fun. Yeah, it was probably a lot of spreading awareness on campus. I remember doing a lot of that.

WOO: For sure.

Could you talk to me more about the Millennium March on Washington? How you—how you organized people on campus to go, and—and more about the march, itself?

JACOBS: Yeah. So at the time, [Pamela S.] "Pam" Misener [pronounced MIZE-nuhr] was the director of I guess—what do you call it?—LGB Center? I don't think there was an LGBT Center at the time. I think it was maybe an office, if I remember.

WOO: Uh-huh. Where was the office?

JACOBS: I feel like she was in Collis, but—

WOO: Collis? Okay.

JACOBS: This was—this was a while ago. And so, yeah, I just remember—I'm sure she, you know, sent out an e-mail or Blitzed the campus [using BlitzMail], and whoever wanted to go could go. And I remember signing up, and we had these charter buses drive us all the way down to Washington. I just remember—I still remember getting up *super* early, so it must have been, like, four or five a.m. that we left.

And then I—I remember we all had these shirts that we had made, that we had gotten. It was Dartmouth—but the O-U-T in DARTMOUTH was kind of rainbow colored, so for “OUT.” And it was just—it was an amazing experience being, you know—I felt really proud representing Dartmouth. We had a Dartmouth banner that we walked with. And I felt very proud representing Dartmouth there.

Cause Dartmouth always, or at least while I was there, had the reputation of being more conservative of the Ivies [Ivy League colleges], so I felt proud showing that, you know, there are out kids on campus. It’s not completely conservative up there.

WOO: And at the march, did you—did you meet a lot—different other people, or did you kind of stick with the little Dartmouth group, and what was the crowd like?

JACOBS: I remember sticking mostly with—with Dartmouth people. It’s funny. Now that you’re asking, I’m kind of having, like, these flashbacks of things.

WOO: [cross-talk] Tell me, yeah.

JACOBS: I remember there being kind of the—the protesters there, kind of the, you know, the “you’re going to hell” and all that, which—which hasn’t really gone away.

WOO: No! [Chuckles.]

JACOBS: We went to—we went to New Hope Pride [sic; New Hope Celebrates PrideFest] with my—with my kids this—I guess at the end of the summer, beginning of the fall, or maybe it was the end of the spring, and—and I remember we crossed the bridge from Lambertville [New Jersey] to New Hope [Pennsylvania], and at the end of the bridge there were, you know, all these huge signs about how “you’re going to hell” and all that.

And I remember my daughter looking at these, and I said, you know, “Let’s just—let’s keep walking.” And she said, “Well, why—why do they have that? Why are they there?” And it’s hard to—like, how do you explain to a—to an eight-

year-old this kind of hatred that some people have in their hearts?

WOO: Right.

JACOBS: And so I—I—I had a difficult time explaining that to her. It mostly revolved around “some people are just really ignorant”. Oh, yeah, so I remember that at the—at the Millennial March. I just remember it being—I remember it being beautiful weather. I remember everybody, you know, just being really excited and—and full of energy. Yeah, it was—it was just a—it was an exciting time. It really was.

WOO: Okay.

I’m going to switch gears back onto campus.

JACOBS: Mm-hm.

WOO: Could you tell me what your—what was your relationship with the frat scene here on campus, and—and how did you engage with it, if at all?

JACOBS: Yeah. So—so I didn’t really at all. I wasn’t in a frat. I had friends who were in Tabard, and I was in the Dodecs [The Dartmouth Dodecaphonics], and we would often hang out at Tabard or at—oh, one of the—I can’t remember the names of all the frats anymore.

WOO: Alpha Theta?

JACOBS: No, it wasn’t that one. It was one of the Sigma something.

WOO: Dodecs?

JACOBS: Yeah.

WOO: What was that?

JACOBS: Yeah, The Dodecaphonics. And so—yeah, so I—I—I would rarely hang out in the frats. Every once in a while I would, and we would play beer Pong. I hated beer, so I would just play water Pong, basically. I think—so I did go to one of the formals, with a guy who was in a fraternity, and in all

honesty, I didn't have any problems. I don't think anybody looked at us twice. I think it was, you know—they all knew that he was gay, and so it was—it was accepted.

And I had gone to—I remember going to one of—to one of the dances on one of the weekends and—and dancing with another guy, and really—I don't know, I—I don't remember that being a problem at all.

WOO: So would you say at your time here, you didn't have—like, there weren't that many conflicts with the frats or [cross-talk] it was peaceful?

JACOBS: I don't think so, but I didn't spend a lot of time in the frats, to be honest. I know that there were conflicts in the frats. I think that—you know, I think there's probably still a lot of hyper-masculinity and hyper-virility in those frats. But I think—

WOO: Just avoided them.

JACOBS: [cross-talk] the frats that I would go to or the houses that I—yeah, I would just either avoid them, or the ones that I went to were ones where I knew I would be accepted.

WOO: For sure.

And so you kind of—to ramp back to kind of you talking about your Jewish identity and feeling different when you were in grade school,—

JACOBS: Mm-hm.

WOO: —did you feel like it kind of—did you feel different as a Jewish man here on campus as well, or did you feel in some ways you—you could hide it or something?

JACOBS: Yeah. I think—I guess I—I wasn't really active in the Jewish community there, and I think it's not something that's painted on my face, and so it's—it's—you know, it's something that I didn't really feel as a huge part of my identity when I was at Dartmouth. So I didn't really feel different because of that. I would say that my gay identity definitely made me feel different, just in general. I—I—I still feel different because of my gender identity. Not in a bad way, just, you know, in a

different way: This is the way I am. So I think that had more of an effect on—on my experience at Dartmouth than did my Jewish identity.

WOO: Could you tell me some—some examples or some memories you had on campus that—where a situation or something made you feel different because of your gay identity? Besides [chuckles] co-founding the GSA.

JACOBS: Yeah. [Chuckles.]

WOO: Or maybe there wasn't.

JACOBS: That's a good question. Obviously, when Yvette Schneider was brought to campus, that made me feel kind of personally attacked, I would say. I think—I'm trying to think of other experiences where I felt really different. I think that every once in a while I remember there being articles in *The Dartmouth* about, you know, LGBT issues and—and feeling different or not really, you know, supported by everybody with that.

I'm trying to think of other—other examples of how I felt different. I don't know.

WOO: That's fine. I'm not [chuckles] trying to, like, force you to—to spin a narrative of being different. I just was curious.

JACOBS: No, in all honesty, I think it has a lot to do with the people with whom I surrounded myself. I—my friends were all extremely liberal. And so, you know, I—I basically had my one subset of friends that, you know, we were kind of all friends since the beginning of freshman year, and then I had my a capella group,—

WOO: Mm-hm., the Dodecs.

JACOBS: —and those were really, like, my—my two—my two main groups of friends on campus. And both super liberal, super opening and accept- —open and accepting, so—yeah, I think—I guess I luckily didn't run into a lot of issues. And, you know, even if I—I guess I think about the classes that I took, so I majored in music and French, which are two, I'd

say, pretty liberal domains. And so even—even in the classroom, I really never found much hostility toward gays.

WOO: For sure.

Would you—in terms of your friends that you made freshman year, could you remind me how—how you became friends with them, your freshman friends?

JACOBS: [cross-talk] yeah so—some, so I guess one of them, Amand] and I became friends before going to Dartmouth. She and I had chatted on line, —

WOO: On AOL.

JACOBS: —had hung out a little bit. Yeah, on AOL. You got it. AOL Instant Messenger.

WOO: [Chuckles.]

JACOBS: Don't laugh at me. You're making me feel old.

WOO: [Chuckles.] No, I just—I'm admiring.

JACOBS: Okay. And—and then her roommate was Kristen, and so we became friends with her, and then just kind of all brought in—like, everybody kind of brought in a couple of friends, and we were just a really close group of, like,—I'd say there were about seven or eight of us.

WOO: Okay. And would you say your friend group—was it—what was, like, the gender distribution, or, like, and how—and what was the makeup of your group?

JACOBS: It was really—it was a very diverse group: you know, black, Puerto Rican, male, female, upper middle class, lower middle class. There was—it was a really diverse group of friends, I would say.

WOO: And were—were most of your friends queer as well, or—was it diverse in that way as well, in orientation?

JACOBS: No, only at the—at the time, only two—so two of us identified as queer at the time, so two of the, let's say, seven or eight.

WOO: Uh-huh. You mentioned that your friend group was most—was, like, among—was diverse among, like, the upper middle class and the middle class. Why do you think—or how—how do you think it became like that? You did mention people from the lower class—was it because at that time, was there less economic diversity on campus as a whole, or do you think you just kind of gravitated towards people from, like, were similar to you?

JACOBS: No. Well, I think—I—I guess when I say the lower middle class, it was—you know, I had friends who graduated Dartmouth with—with no loan money to pay back, and I had friends who graduated and I remember coming back—they came back from the office, crying because of the amount of money that they had to pay. So—yeah, I guess, you know, we could go from—from lower class to upper middle class, I would say, was my friend group.

WOO: Right. I guess the question I was just trying to get at was, like, how did you feel socioeconomics, like, affected culture on campus, particularly, like, queer culture on campus, if at all?

JACOBS: Mm-hm. You know, I don't know if it really affected—I guess it must have affected the—the things that—that I maybe took for granted, coming from an upper middle class family, even if it were just, like, ordering food. You know, I had friends for whom that would be more difficult, not that I would do it often or—you know, there was on the corner next to the Hanover Inn, there was a Gap [clothing store], and I remember, like, I could go shopping for clothes there, and some of my friends couldn't.

But it was—I think it wasn't as maybe pronounced as it is nowadays. I feel like, you know, as technology has—has evolved, you know, you can tell who has the iPhone 11 or who still is walking around with the iPhone 6 and things like that. There's—it seems maybe that there's more outward disparity—than there was at the time.

WOO: For sure.

On a similar vein in terms of culture, how do you—what—how would you describe gay culture on campus at that time? In whatever way you'd like.

JACOBS: I would—I would say gay culture on campus at the time was pretty much clandestine. It was—there were not a—a lot of out gay people. I think—gosh, if you had asked me my freshman year to, like, name the out gay men on campus, I probably could have done so on my two hands, maybe even on one hand. So it was—and it was—you know, it was also the kind of thing where it made dating really difficult because, you know, you're looking—you're looking to date somebody, but the pickings were slim, I would say. And so that was—that was hard as well.

WOO: Would you date anyone on campus or tried to date?

JACOBS: Kind of. I kind of wanted to date somebody who was coming to terms with his sexual orientation and unfortunately, while he was at Dartmouth, never really managed to come to terms with it, and so it made our relationship really difficult because on one hand, you know, we would get together and hook up or snuggle or chat or whatever, and on the other hand, then he would I think feel this sort of immense guilt for having done that and—and kind of push me away. So that—that was difficult.

I remember—I found, actually, when I was at my mother's maybe about a month ago, I found these letters that he had written me when we were [cross-talk] at Dartmouth together together.

WOO: [Sharp intake of breath.] Oh!

JACOBS: And it was really interesting to, you know, read through and—and kind of remember both his feelings and my own feelings of—you know, of—of really kind of falling for somebody but that person not being comfortable yet with who he is. And so now he's out, and he has a partner and all that. But at the time, it was—you know, it was really difficult for me, as it was for really a lot of people at the time. I think there were a lot of guys that had a really hard time coming out, and so it was—yeah, it was another time.

I mean, it's still hard for a lot of guys to come out. In teaching at a high school, I know that we have, you know, we have a lot of closeted students on campus still, so as much as we've kind of progressed as a society, I think there's still a long way to go.

WOO: For sure. Was—in your relationship, would you describe yourself as the one who was more out and secure in your queer identity, whereas he was closeted the whole time, basically?

JACOBS: Yeah. Oh, absolutely. I was the one who—I remember we had gone to maybe Burlington [Vermont] at some point to go to a club, and I got these, like,—like, three-inch platform shoes that I was wearing.

WOO: [Laughs.]

JACOBS: And I probably had, like, my nails painted black, and I had, like, a, you know, rainbow necklace on and super skinny jeans and all that. I was, like,—I think I had dyed my hair black. I was just—yeah, I was definitely—

WOO: Out there.

JACOBS: —had gone—I was definitely out. I had gone way out. Probably I was making up for a lot of the time that I spent in the closet being kind of suppressed, and so—yeah, I was definitely very out, in many ways. And, yeah, he, on the other hand, was extremely closeted. And also, you know, I think his family wasn't very supportive when he tried to talk to them about it, either, so I think that that had a lot to do with why he stayed in the closet and tried not to be gay.

WOO: Was he religious as well?

JACOBS: Yes, he was also religious. He was religious.

WOO: Okay. Could you remind me how you met—how you met him?

JACOBS: That's a good question. I actually don't remember how we met. I think we had chatted on line first.

WOO: On AOL?

JACOBS: I don't remember. I—I don't remember where we would have chatted. I don't know if it was on, like, IRC [Internet Relay Chat] at the time or there was, like, a Gay.com. It as some sort of chat website for gay people. And so I think he and I chatted there first, if I remember correctly. And he wouldn't tell me who he was.

WOO: That's odd. [Chuckles.]

JACOBS: Yeah. And then finally, you know, he must have felt comfortable enough to tell me who he was. I don't remember it all that well, but that's kind of what I got out of the letters that I found.

WOO: Okay. And was this, like, website unique to Dartmouth, or was this, like, just a—

JACOBS: No, no, there was definitely not a unique gay website for Dartmouth at the time. This must have been—it must have been, like, Gay.com. I feel like Gay.com had a chat, or even IRC—you probably don't even know what IRC is.

WOO: I don't.

JACOBS: It's Internet Relay Chat, and that was, like, another kind of online kind of like chat boards that you could go on and—and chat with people, so it might have been on there. I—honestly, I really don't remember.

WOO: Oh, was he a Dartmouth student?

JACOBS: Yeah, yeah, he was a Dartmouth student as well, yup.

WOO: So he just happened to be a Dartmouth student that you chatted with?

JACOBS: Right. Yeah, he just happened to be a Dartmouth student as well.

WOO: Okay. I see. That's what I was trying to understand.

JACOBS: Yeah. And actually—and—and come—come to think of it now, there was another boy at Dartmouth, whom I had met on the AOL Instant Messaging before we went to Dartmouth, and he and I also chatted a lot, and he was also gay but, again, was not comfortable coming out yet. So, yeah, there were a lot of—I feel like—I almost felt like it was, you know, water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink. It was kind of like, there were a lot of gay people there, but not anybody who was out.

WOO: [Chuckles.] Was it just those two relationships you kind of had on campus in your time here?

JACOBS: The latter wasn't really a relationship; that was just kind of a friendship, and I think I was—he and I had really similar tastes in music, if I remember, and I kind of remember having a little crush on him, but nothing ever came of that.

The first guy that we talked about, that was—that was my only, I guess, quote unquote, “relationship,” although that was—would have been a really messed-up relationship. But, yeah, he was the only—the only Dartmouth student that I kind of had a relationship with.

I did briefly date somebody from town, but that really didn't last all that long. And then I had met this French exchange student, who was down in Manchester [New Hampshire], and he and I—and so I would, like, drive down there on the weekends, and he—he and I actually dated for over a year, because this was my senior year I had met him. And—and then I went—he moved back to France.

And I moved to France after my senior year of college, to teach English there. And so we were about an hour away from each other when I moved to France, and so we stayed together, and we would see each other on weekends. And he had not been out to his family. Came out to them when I was there.

WOO: Wow. Okay. I'm going to loop back and ask you more about that later, in a bit. But I wanted to ask—so it seems to be that—did you meet all these guys on the online chat room?

JACOBS: Yeah. Yeah.

WOO: How about—this is, like, in terms of relationships—how about hookup culture? Was there, like, a hookup culture for—among the gay guys on campus, or was it just, like, just relationships?

JACOBS: You know, I think back then—I mean, I feel like nowadays there's so much more of a hookup culture among teens and early twenties than there was back then, but I'd say back then, I was—I was really looking for love most of the time. I don't think—I don't really—hookups interested me, I guess, a little bit, but I was really looking for relationship, and I was really—you know, I—I think I just felt so suppressed for so long when I was in the closet back at home that emotionally I just wanted somebody to love, somebody to love me.

So I think actually—I don't know, maybe that was also part of my—I don't know, I won't say "problem." But I think that there could have been other people that were looking more just for hookups at the time, and I was really just, you know, getting my heart broken looking for love.

WOO: [Chuckles.] Yeah. [Chuckles.] I see what you're saying.

Would you say—in terms of, like, overall queer culture, do you think that the GSA had a—had a big part in creating culture, or—I mean, you mentioned that there wasn't much of a culture at all than, like, a clandestine culture, so—

JACOBS: I think it helped maybe create awareness. I think what it did, too, is it—it kind of—it opened it up to non-gay people. That was what was really important for us, is that, you know, there *were* allies on campus and—and people who were interested in being allies, but they didn't have any way to get involved. And so when we created the GSA, you know, it allowed them to also support their—support us, support their friends, you know, go to the Millennial March and things like that. The Millennium March—yeah. So I think it—I think it helped, I guess, yeah, spread awareness of—of gay culture on campus.

WOO: For sure.

On a lighter note, when you weren't doing Dodecs or—or focusing on classes, what did you like to do on campus to kind of—to relax and to lighten up? And where—where would you go?

JACOBS: Hmm. So actually, I spent a lot of time in the music department. I—I put out a CD when I was—it must have been my freshman year I put out a CD. And then for my senior thesis, I put out a CD as well. So I wrote a lot of music, spent a lot of time in the practice rooms and in the—in the music part of the Hop [the Hopkins Center for the Arts].

I played on all the different pianos and the harpsichords and forte pianos and everything that we had. I did some performing. I guess my CD release concert I think my freshman year—I did in Collis Common Ground. And then for my senior thesis, I did a performance in the Hop, in Spaulding Auditorium. I think I was the first solo student performance in there, which was awesome.

WOO: Wow!

JACOBS: Yeah. You can—you can go to the music library and find a copy of the CD, I'm sure, and the video.

WOO: Mm-hm.

JACOBS: Yeah, so I—I did a lot of that. Otherwise, my friends and I just, you know, spent a lot of time on the [Dartmouth] Green, just hanging out and talking. I used to like to go to—what was it, Sanborn [Library]? What's the library next to Baker[-Berry Library].

WOO: Yeah, Sanborn.

JACOBS: [cross-talk] where they had the tea time. Yeah, I used to like going to Sanborn for tea. I used to—I used to go to the reading room every once in a while at Baker, and I would inevitably fall asleep in one of those green velour chairs, trying to read.

I'm trying to think of other places that we would go. I just remember like every once in a while we would go and—and

get a canoe or something and paddle out to an island and have a picnic. Yeah, or we—I remember one night where there were all these shooting stars. We went and drove out to kind of a field in the middle of nowhere and laid down and—and watched all the shooting stars together.

Otherwise, we'd hang out a lot in friends' rooms.

WOO: Mm-hm. Yeah, since you avoided, like, the frat scene and everything to do with it.

JACOBS: Yeah, I really—yeah, I really didn't spend much time in the frats. You know, the only times I would spend in the frats are either with my a capella group or—so my friends also—a few of them kind of started dating some guys from I think it was Tri Kap [Kappa Kappa Kappa], and so we would go there every once in a while to their—their dances and their parties.

WOO: And these were—these were your straight friends?

JACOBS: Right, yeah, these were my straight friends, yeah.

WOO: How about—a flip side: What are some distinct conflicts or kind of hard times you had on campus? And—and what do you think kind of conspired to lead to those?

JACOBS: That's a good question.

WOO: If at all.

JACOBS: I don't—I wouldn't—I don't really think I had that many, you know, hard times on campus.

WOO: That's good.

JACOBS: I don't—

WOO: That's nice to hear.

JACOBS: Yeah, I think—maybe I was just so out that people were also afraid to say anything to me if they had something to say. And I had some really close friends that I spent most of my time with. And so, yeah, even—you know, my professors were all very accepting of me.

WOO: That's good to hear.

JACOBS: Yeah. I really—I had an overall very positive experience, I would say.

WOO: That's good to hear. How about—yeah, what were some of the professors that you distinctly remember and some of the classes that you think—that you had a great time with?

JACOBS: Yeah. That's a great question. So I—John [A.] Rassias was one of my favorite professors, a huge—

WOO: From the language department?

JACOBS: Yeah, from the language department. You know, from where the Rassias Method comes. And so he was really, I'd say, one of my biggest mentors and inspirations for becoming a teacher myself and really one of the reasons I kind of came back to go to grad school. I remember speaking with him when I was living in France, and he said to me, "Okay, Brian, we gotta get you back here to grad school or else you're gonna stay in France for the rest of your life." And so, you know, I—I owe a lot of who I am today, where I am today, how I think as a teacher today—I owe a lot of that to him.

And then I think also Faith [E.] Beasley, who's still in the French department. Actually, I looked the other day, before our interview, to see who's still around, and so she's still there. And she was just amazing. I remember she came to my concert in Spaulding, brought her kids, and was always really supportive of me.

So I'd say those were probably two. And then Jon [H.] Appleton in the music department. He was my—my thesis adviser my senior year. I had him—I took a few classes with him. I think just he helped me develop so much as a musician. He was really a—a great mentor as well.

Yeah, lots of—I—I—I feel fortunate to have had so many close relationships with professors. I—I do interviews for Dartmouth now, and when kids ask me what I love about Dartmouth, that's one of the things I really loved, was the

ability to get to know my professors well and to really feel like they knew me.

WOO: Mm-hm. And I think it's kind of clear that a lot of these professors had a big impact on—on your trajectory and kind of in shaping you.

JACOBS: Mm-hm.

WOO: Outside of Dartmouth or even—yeah. Were there any other icons or people you looked up to within just like American culture or just overall culture that you remember of?

JACOBS: That's a good question.

WOO: Like, in the music industry or—

JACOBS: Yeah.

WOO: —in pop culture?

JACOBS: I loved—I always loved Tori Amos. I think she spoke to me a lot as a musician when I was in high school. I think that her music really got me through a lot of hard times and inspired a lot of my own music.

I think—I'm trying to think of other people. I think at the time, there was, like,—like, Ellen [DeGeneres] was coming out, and I think that that was really inspiring, having no really prominent out gay people.

Yeah, I guess—you know, maybe it sounds cliché, but my family—I've always looked up to my mother, my brother.

WOO: That was actually plenty enough—that was my ques- —my next question, was about Ellen, that Ellen kind of came out just about the time, around the time that you were here at Dartmouth.

JACOBS: Yeah. Mm-hm.

WOO: I was wondering if you could recount that and tell me about how—what discourse was around campus at that time and how, if at all, it influenced you.

JACOBS: Yeah. I wish my memory were good enough to remember all that. It's not. But I do—so I guess growing up, I remember—so there was *Will & Grace*, which was really one of the kind of first TV shows to feature a prominently out actor and gay character in the show. And I just remember being thirsty for that, just wanting there to be, you know, more and more gay representation on TV and the media and music and magazines at the time, even, I remember.

Like, if there was somebody gay on the cover of *Rolling Stone* or whatever, it was just such a—it was so validating, I think, because after being in the closet for so long and—really feeling lonely and alone, I think that that was, you know, hard because I went to a high school with probably over a thousand kids, and I—I still remember thinking, *I am the only gay person here*, which mathematically is [cross-talk] implausible.

WOO: Right. [Chuckles.]

JACOBS: I remember that feeling of really being the only one. And so, yeah, when—when, you know, these public figures and comedians and actors and everybody started coming out more frequently, I think that it just felt really validating, and it was kind of—you know, it was during the “We’re here, we’re queer” movement, and it was nice knowing that, *No, I’m not alone, and there are all these other people out there and, you know, good role models out there.*

But, yeah, to—to answer your question about campus, I really—I don’t remember. I don’t remember there being much of a discourse around it when I was on campus.

WOO: Okay.

Well, let’s transition, moving towards, like, life after college and life after Dartmouth. Could you kind of speak to me more about what you did right after college?

JACOBS: Mm-hm.

WOO: And we’ll go from there.

JACOBS: Yeah. So after I graduated, I moved to France. I lived in Lyon for two years, where I was a—a teaching assistant, so I helped teach English there. It was an amazing experience. I absolutely loved living abroad, living in France. My first year, I was living at a university there, so I had all these French roommates I was living with.

WOO: Was it the [Université Lumière] Lyon deux?
JACOBS: What?

WOO: Was that Lyon deux?

JACOBS: No, I was at—at the École Normale Supérieure. It's one of the—one of the—they—they would call those—the kids that went to those schools “big heads,” they're one of the bigger schools in the southern part of Lyon.

WOO: I was in Lyon just last year. [Chuckles.]

JACOBS: Oh, really?

WOO: For the [French] LSA [Language Studies Abroad] Plus.

JACOBS: Oh, that's great.

WOO: I don't want to take over this interview, but I just thought I'd pop that in. [Chuckles.]

JACOBS: Oh, yeah. Well, I loved—I absolutely love Lyon, I did. It just felt kind of freeing being in a big city, too. Going from Hanover to Lyon was—that was a big difference. I love being in French culture. I love teaching. It was a really fun experience. The school I was teaching at had a couple out gay teachers, too, which was really fun, teaching alongside them. And—and really I had a great time. I think that John Rassias was right, that I could have just lived the rest of my life in Lyon had I not come back to—to grad school.

But I decided that—you know, I was thinking about becoming a professor, and so I decided that grad school would be the thing to do, so I—I moved back to—to Princeton [University], where I did my—my Ph.D. And that was an interesting, I guess, thirteen years of my life, or don't know how many years, eleven years of my life.

WOO: At Princeton.

JACOBS: I started—so I started at Princeton in 2004 and did my, you know, three years of coursework and my general exams and all that. Then my husband and I met—he and I met in 2005, actually, and he and I became best friends. For a few years, I was, you know, working on my—my master's work, and he was working on his master's at FIT [Fashion Institute of Technology] in New York [City, New York]. And so most evenings, you know, we would get together and sit down and—and just work at his dining room table together.

And so our friendship grew and grew, and I would have kind of my boyfriends on my side; he would have his boyfriends on his side. I would always find fault in his boyfriends, and he would always find faults in mine. And eventually we, you know, decided, *Well, why don't we date?* And so we did, and that was in 2006 or 2007 that we started dating. And then pretty quickly, you know, bought a house together, adopted a cat together.

And then from an early stage, he and I talked a lot about having kids and how that was something that really interested the—the two of us. And so we started researching that probably in about 2009. We would go into New York, and there was—at the LGBT Center [the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center] there—there was a group called Men Having Babies, and so we would go to those meetings and kind of find out—you know, learned about surrogacy and adoption and all the intricacies that go into that.

And so we met with a few—a few companies that kind of facilitated surrogacy, and so we decided not to go with these agencies because I figured, you know, *Why pay them all this money? I'm a doctoral student. I know how to do research. I can figure out how to research all this myself.*

So we kind of set up our own team. We managed to find a surrogate. We found a—an egg donor through our fertility clinic up in Connecticut. We found a lawyer to work with in Pennsylvania, where the surrogate was from. We found a psychologist to work with in case our surrogate needed

somebody or in case we needed somebody. So we kind of put all the pieces together.

And then we started the process—it must have been 2009 that we started. And so we did our first retrieval—so when they retrieve the eggs from our egg donor and then implant the embryos into our surrogate, our gestational surrogate, and so that didn't take. So that was—you know, I remember feeling really disappointed. That was our—our first try. We were—I think we had put in two embryos. It didn't take.

Then our second try, we did get pregnant, and so I remember—I think maybe—maybe a month or maybe a month and a half in, they started seeing some kind of abnormalities in the ultrasound, but just things that they were watching. And so in about—it must have been right as we were entering into our third trimester—you know, Hervé [Pierini] and I started telling people that “we're pregnant.”

And it was right around then that we—we met with—with our surrogate. We had gone for another ultrasound, but they found all kinds of problems with the embryo. We would up going to CHOP [Children's Hospital of Philadelphia] in Pennsylvania, and I just remember—I had gone alone. My husband was working that day. And so I was there with our surrogate, and I remember them sitting us around this big boardroom table with these doctors and social workers and everything and basically telling us, “There—you know, there are all these problems” and just listing all the problems that there were with the embryo and basically telling us that this was, you know, not going to be a viable pregnancy and that if the baby were to be born, the baby would never survive. And so we had to terminate the pregnancy in the second trimester, which was really, really difficult.

And so we went back for one—one more try with our surrogate. You know, she was—she was a trouper and stuck through it with us, and so we put in the rest of our embryos that we had, and I think we had four embryos and so we put all four in, figuring, “This is it,” because our doctor wanted to put three in, but then we said, “You know, we're not gonna keep one embryo because then, you know, what would you do with that?”

So we put them all in, and—and we wound up getting our twins, Emma and Noah, who are eight years old now and are just—you know, the most amazing kids ever. So it all—it all worked out in the end, but it was really—you know, it—it tested us. It was really difficult at times. And, gosh, if there were ever any kids who know that they were really planned for and wanted, it's—it's mine because it took a lot of planning and a lot of tries, but we got them.

WOO: For sure. How was it navigating this—the whole process of surrogacy? Did you—did you feel like there was a community of—of other, like, couples who were trying to do as well, or—or—

JACOBS: Yeah. So we would go into the city, to that Men Having Babies kind of group in New York, and that was really as much a, like, information gathering as it was a support group for—for people that were trying to do this. But we were both living in Princeton at the time and knew of no other couples at the time that—you know, no other gay couples that had kids. We—we knew of some lesbians that had kids. Obviously, the processes—it was a little easier for them. They didn't have as many moving—moving pieces.

But, yeah, it was—I felt kind of like we were trailblazers a little bit. I—I—even at the hospital that we gave birth at, I think that we were the first ones to have a pre-birth order there, so meaning my husband, Hervé and I—we were the only ones on the birth certificate. It was Parent 1, Parent 2. There was no mention of the surrogate as the mother.

But they—so this was in Allentown, Pennsylvania. They couldn't have been—they could not have been nicer to us at the hospital. They were just bending over backwards to show how accepting they were. You know, just for example, our—our son was born just a little bit too light, and so they kept him in the NICU [neonatal intensive care unit] because he wasn't heavy enough. He needed to be two kilos; he was 1.98 kilos.

And they decided to keep our daughter as well, because they didn't want to separate them. And there's one bedroom for parents at the NICU, and so they gave us that bedroom,

really just anything they could to—to show their support, they did, which was really, really nice.

WOO: For sure.

Can you speak to me more about how—how kind of more today, how being a French—like, being a French teacher—how—how—what is it like? And—and in what ways, like, Dartmouth shaped you to be the way or, like, the career that you have right now.

JACOBS: Mm-hm. So I think—so as I said, when I went to grad school, I was thinking about becoming a professor.

WOO: Right.

JACOBS: And as I was a student at Princeton, we had gotten an e-mail from somebody here at Lawrenceville, where I teach now, The Lawrenceville School, and—and they were asking for a tutor, and so I came down here, and I tutored this girl a couple of times a week and got to know this—this world that was completely foreign to me. I had gone to a public school, knew very little about, you know, private schools or boarding schools.

And I met the—the department chair at the time, because she was this—this young woman's teacher. And then they had a maternity replacement that they needed filled, and so she asked if I could come teach here, and I said, you know, "Sure."

And I really just love the interaction that I had with the students. I think if you had told me twenty years ago that I would be working with high school students today, I probably would have told you, "You're crazy." But I really—I really enjoyed kind of getting to know these kids, both in—in the classroom but also outside, as dancers and actors and—and—and people playing on—on the sports fields and everything. It was just—it was—it was nice to—to get to know them better than I had gotten to know my students at Princeton, because as a grad student, I was—I was teaching there or precepting there.

So little by little, you know, I decided that this would probably be maybe more up my alley, just—I—I feel more a part of my students' lives here than I did teaching at a university. And I—I really find it rewarding. So my family and I—actually, in 2012 we moved onto campus, and so I'm a dorm parent here. And so I live in a—basically, my apartment is attached to a dorm of thirty senior girls, and my kids can, you know, run out whenever they want and go and play with the girls in the house. They have good babysitting when I need babysitting.

And it's a great community. I really think it's an awesome place to raise kids and an awesome place for—even just for us to live. I think that it's—it's full of culture and—and energy, and it's—it's really fun. So I'm loving it. My kids are loving it. My husband loves it. He makes crepes for the girls in the house all the time.

WOO: How about—what is the—what is the culture or the—what is the culture like there at Princeton in that—how did it differ from the culture or the gay culture here on campus at Dartmouth?

JACOBS: That's a good ques- —so I think when I was at Princeton, it was—it's harder to say as a grad student—I feel like when you're a grad student, you're kind of—

WOO: That's true.

JACOBS: —kind of stuck in your department. You know, I don't think I left the French department very often. I went to the eating clubs, maybe—maybe once or twice when I was a grad student there. I think—I did go to—I remember I went to a formal with a guy at his eating club. But, again, it was one of the super-liberal ones, so that was not a problem.

So I don't know that I would say it was all that much different. I think that when I was at—at Princeton, they had a bigger LGBT Center than we did at Dartmouth. But—and maybe some—maybe more out students. But I think that was just the times changing as well.

And then here at Lawrenceville, where I teach, I think—you know, I think the society has evolved in—in so many ways,

but I think it's still really hard for our—our younger students—so our high school students—I think it's really hard for them to be gay and to be out. And I—I look around campus, and we have a handful of out kids, which is more than I can say when I was in high school. But it's still, you know, very heteronormative here. I think that kids have a hard time coming out.

And so that's something that I'm very active as a faculty member, trying to—to help improve things on campus, just as far as diversity, equity and inclusion go in general.

WOO: Uh-huh.

You mentioned that here at Dartmouth, you had a lot of mentors who—who shaped you and your identity. How do you think you've been doing this—been doing so at the Lawrence school as well? Or if at all. Or if you see yourself as a mentor.

JACOBS: I—I hope so.

WOO: [Laughs.]

JACOBS: I think I do. You know, one of the reasons I teach is not just to obviously impart knowledge of the French language and culture but really to mentor my students as well, so I think—you know, [cross-talk] I've had—

WOO: Right!

JACOBS: —over my years here, I've had plenty of students come—come out to me. I've had, you know, students kind of pace in front of my classroom door, and I can tell something's on their mind, and so I say, “Hey, what's goin' on?” And they'll come in, and I have had students just break down and tell me. And so I feel like I've hopefully been able to help a lot of students.

I would say it's kind of—it's crazy that I feel like my high school time was—it wasn't hard, but I—I think it was hard for me being gay and just feeling so uncomfortable in my own skin for so long, and here I am spending, you know, my adult life back in high school. So it's funny that I, you know, made

the choice to come back to high school. But I think part of it is kind of trying to right the wrongs of the past and—and maybe make it so that students nowadays don't feel the way that I used to when I was back in high school.

And so I think that being out on campus is just—it's really helping to normalize things as well. You know, the students [cross-talk] see me—

WOO: Sure.

JACOBS: —they see my husband, they see my kids, they see our family, they—you know, they get to know me more than just a teacher, which I think is really important, so I think that just my mere presence on campus and living in the house and—I think that that's, you know, already helping a lot.

WOO: You mentioned talking about kind of rewriting or reclaiming your high school experience. If you could—this will be my only hypothetical question: If you could go back to high school or go back to your time here at Dartmouth, what do you see yourself doing differently?

JACOBS: I think if I could—I don't know if I would change much at Dartmouth. I really had a great experience there. I think if I could change something, I would go back to high school, and I would, you know, tell my fifteen-, sixteen-, seventeen-year-old self, like, "It's okay to be who you are. Don't worry about it. Don't worry about other people judging you. You know, you are who you are, and—and—and that's okay, and you don't have to feel ashamed of it." And I think that that's—and I think I would have had a much different high school experience if I felt more comfortable, in my own skin.

WOO: Mmm.

I want to be mindful of your time. I know you have to head out in a bit, but we tend to like to end these interviews by asking why you chose to participate in this SpeakOut oral history project. And to follow that, kind of what pieces of advice you would like to leave to other queer Dartmouth students on campus right now.

JACOBS: Yeah. So I guess—so to answer your first question, I—I think it's really important to understand the history of a place, and I think that, you know, having been at—at Dartmouth and creating—creating the GSA there, being there during some times of, you know, turmoil—I think it's important that our current students know kind of what we had to go through to—to get, you know, things like this club in place or to, you know, kind of counter some of the hateful or vitriolic speech that there was at the time. So I'd say that's why I—I decided to do this.

And, you know, I just—I—I think it's—yeah, anything I can do to help I guess the next generation I think is really what I'm trying to do. And I'd—I'd say any I guess any recommendations I have for them is follow your hearts, which sounds really cheesy, I know, but I think that's kind of what I've done in life. I've definitely gotten to a place where I'm happy.

Don't be ashamed of who you are, and never let anybody tell you that you are not good because you are different. And I'd say keep—you know, keep challenging where you see the need to challenge. If something isn't right and if you don't feel like, you know, the college is doing something right, then call them out. You know, I—I remember having conversations with administrators there about, you know, things that I didn't think were right. And I think that that's helped me throughout life too, is always sticking up for yourself and for what you believe in.

WOO: What—what hopes do you kind of have for—between, like, Dartmouth LGBT alumni and future LGBT Dartmouth students on campus? Do you have any hopes for more interaction or collaborations?

JACOBS: Yeah, I think it would be great. I think that—you know, any way that I can give back, especially to the LGBT community, I would love to. I think that, you know, I'm happy to be a mentor for anybody on campus. You know, like I said, I do alumni interviews now, so that I feel is one way that I'm giving back to the school. But I would love to—yeah, anything that I can do, you know, for the LGBT community on campus, that would be kind of my—my—my biggest interest, I'd say.

WOO: Okay. If anything does pop up, I'll be sure to contact you.

JACOBS: Yeah, please do. Put my name down on that list. I'm happy to—happy to help.

WOO: Well, I'd like to thank you so much for your time, Brian.

JACOBS: Absolutely, thank *you*.

WOO: It was a pleasure to hear your story and get the time to ask you kind of these questions. If there's any— —is there anything—are there any last words or things you'd like to—any recommendations or suggestions about the SpeakOut project or—or even in general about life you'd like to share?

JACOBS: No, I don't think so. Enjoy life, because it's too short. Make the most of it. Be good to the people around you. I think that's words that I try to live by. But, no, I think—I think it's great that you guys are doing this project. I really am glad to be a part of it, and I wish you a lot of success in the rest of your time at Dartmouth and beyond.

WOO: Well, thank you very much.

[End of interview.]