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A Conversation with David B. Harvie

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Interviewee: David Harvie

Interviewer(s): Aiden Maynard and Kaitlyn Meehan

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Location of Interview: College of the Holy Cross, Podcast Room, located in Stein Hall's
Multimedia Resources Center

Course Title: HIST 299 - Making History

Professor: Stephanie Yuhl

Begins at 0:14

Kaitlyn Meehan: Hello.

Aiden Maynard: How are you today?

David Harvie: Hi, okay, good.

Aiden: Alright, so, we'll start with just a few simple questions. We'll just—sorry. So, I'm Aiden, this is Kaitlyn.

Kaitlyn: I'm Kaitlyn.

Aiden: Thank you for agreeing to do this project. We would like to remind you that this is all on your own, personal—what you would like to share with us. You can share as much or as little as you want to. This can go on—really, you can determine the length and how much you are willing to share. So, thank you for being willing to do this.

Kaitlyn: Yes, thank you.

David: Sure.

Aiden: And, just another reminder, this will be going on the Crossworks website, which I believe you said you checked out last time while we were talking on the phone. So that will be uploaded and, if you would like, we can put you as anonymous or we can include your name, so if you... would let us know (quietly).

David: Yeah.

Kaitlyn: Alright, so, just a simple question to begin. How did you decide to come to Holy Cross?

David: I was—neither of my parents went to college and so they weren't terribly involved in my whole college selection process. And so, I guess I wanted a small, smallish, Catholic college. I grew up in the Boston area, so there was just always something about Holy Cross that it seemed like the right fit for me, close enough where—also, I mentioned that I was a day student so I was commuting to school. So, that kinda set the range of colleges that I was going to consider. I had looked at Boston College, and I just felt that was too big for me and there was always just something about Holy Cross that I felt comfortable with.

Aiden: So, what was your transition like from high school to Holy Cross life? Because your first two years would be a little bit different seeing you how were commuting to school every single day. But was there still a big transition from the two?

David: You see, it was very, very smooth for me in that regard. Now, I also was very much the kind of the typical kind of—nerdy kid that very much into school and focused on my course work and all that kind of stuff. And I think part of that was because I was gay that I that was also

a—focusing on being the best student I could be. I didn't have to deal with coming out and some of those issues. But so—also too, given that I was living still at home, that whole component of the usual college transition just didn't really exist for me. And then also probably part of that equation for me is by the end of my first semester freshman year, my father passed away. So that also helped changed the focus of my experience a little bit, because I was the only one living at home with my mother whose dealing with a lot of issues and dealing with my own father's, you know, passing and that kind of stuff. [It was] something that I hadn't anticipated when I was choosing where I was going to school, but it certainly was, you know, in hindsight, when I was glad that I was able to be at home, to be a support for her, during that time.

Aiden and Kaitlyn: I'm very sorry for your loss.

David: Yeah.

Kaitlyn: When were you a student at Holy Cross and what was happening in the world then, just in the United States or in the world?

David: Yeah, well, I entered in the fall of '78 and graduated in '82. And there was Jimmy Carter and the—there was that whole hostage deal where there was 50 hostages were held for over a year in Iran and all that. Also, it was a time of change within the church when Pope John Paul II came to Boston, and I remember it was a state holiday going to see the Pope in Boston Commons and so that was kinda cool. Yeah, you know those were kind of the key things that I think about for the politics of that era.

Aiden: So, taking it a bit smaller, what was Holy Cross like during that time? Was it—because this was relatively soon after it went co-ed, correct?

Kaitlyn: Mh-hmm.

Aiden: And so, what was the dynamic on campus like?

David: Yeah, it's funny that, like looking back at it now, it seems like it was right after the school went co-ed. To me, I—I guess, well, let me see. I was just talking to someone who was in the first class of [when] the school went co-ed. I guess the school went co-ed in maybe the mid '70s, or early '70s.

Kaitlyn: '72 to '73.

David: Okay, okay. And so, by the time I entered in '78, I would bet that the student population was probably, maybe, 60% male, 40% female. So that seemed to me, like, distant history. I mean, it definitely was the very Irish Catholic school that I think it was 96% white, you know. I

mean, I know when I'm on campus now that, and just reading things, I can definitely appreciate the more diverse, on all levels, of the campus now, which is I think is just such a more healthy environment than what we were. One of my criticisms I always had of Holy Cross while I was there is that it was so Irish Catholic, so insulated from the rest of the world. Kind of stuck up on the hill and—

Aiden: Kind of like a little bubble.

David: Yeah, exactly, like a little bubble and especially when that bubble is so uniform. So Catholic, so Irish, so, you know, whatever that role is. And it is the reason why I was so glad I was a day student at that point. Looking back, I wish I had had more of the campus experience, but that was always a criticism while I was there that it was just so, so uniform.

Kaitlyn: You said before that you weren't out until your senior year of Holy Cross, but did you come out to your family earlier or did you come out in high school but then decide not to come out at Holy Cross?

David: I always knew I was gay, okay. It was whether I was—how much I was gonna own my story, own my truth. And I didn't come out to family until my senior year. I told my mother at that point, but I actually delayed telling my brother because I knew that would bring about its own level of issues, which it ultimately did a few years later. But I think that I certainly while I was at Holy Cross my freshman to junior year, I certainly was aware that I was gay, whether I wanted to own it was a different story.

Aiden: Okay, and so just kinda building off of that, so you said that your junior year abroad you were in the Olympic Village in Munich, correct?

David: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Aiden: And so, how did that experience kinda help you become more confident because you said it was during that time you really started to become a little more open and then you were officially out your senior year at school, correct?

David: Yup, that's pretty much true. Yeah, my junior year abroad program was a real year of growth for me on so many levels. And I think a big part of that was just the fact that it was the first time living away from home, okay? So maybe some of those things that other students feel in their freshman year I was kinda experiencing in the junior year and, and so it being 3,000 miles from home, it was—I was very independent. And being exposed to a very wide range both within the program and wide range of students and ways of looking at things. But then just also

by living in a foreign culture, you start to reevaluate things, so like, okay, this isn't always the way I thought it was. I didn't even realize I had a Boston accent until—*All laugh*—I lived in Munich, you know? So, I turned to other people and they started picking up on the accent. So, I mean, again, that's where coming out of that very sheltered environment. And, yeah, I think by the end of the year, it was like part of that whole coming out or maturation process included saying "okay, you know, yes you're gay, get over it and move on, let's figure out how we're going to live our life," especially, you're gonna be a senior, so it's like, "okay, I'm gonna have to be thinking about what am I going to do after college."

Aiden: So was there any part of even, like, European culture that was more accepting of the LGBTQ community or do you think it really just being your own individual and independent person in a foreign country really helped you?

David: I would say it's a bit of both where I definitely learned—I mean, for instance, I remember one guy in the program who was head of his college LGBT group. And, of course, Holy Cross back then did not have any kind of on-campus group. And so, he might have been the first person who I ever knew who was like openly gay... in a very militant, might not be the right word, but in a very out kind of way. So it was like, okay, so that's interesting. And I lived in Munich, and I remember I went through the Dachau concentration camp with a survivor and the Dachau concentration camp was used primarily for gypsies and homosexuals. It wasn't the usual concentration camp that was mostly aimed against Jews. It was— and reading about it later, I mean, in the mid '30s, the largest seminary in the world was the Dachau concentration camp because the Nazis had rounded up so many Catholic priests. Many under the allegation that they were themselves gay, which may or may not have been the case. But it was a safe way to go after Catholic priests. So, all those world experiences and coupled with just the individual, and I also I had a serious—I had a girlfriend that was in the program. And, it was like, okay, and, to this day, she and I are very close friends, but it was, like, okay, I want something different. *Laughs.* And that was...she was probably the first person I ever told that I was gay, or I think I told her I was bisexual. But then, like I say, to this day, she is still one of my best friends.

Kaitlyn: And who was your support system at Holy Cross? I know you mentioned there wasn't a lot of LGBTQ support at Holy Cross during the time that you were there. I mean, was there anything at the Chaplains' office or was there a early version of PRIDE, or the Allies, or the Gay Straight Alliance or anything?

David: *Laughs.* No. There wasn't anything like that. And, honestly, where I was at, where I was at that point in my life, I didn't need it. Now, I did speak to—because after I graduated Holy Cross, I went into the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, and, which is what brought me ultimately to New Jersey; I taught school in Newark. So, I guess this was fall of my senior year and talking to the Chaplain, Father Manning, and saying “okay, I'm gay but I want to go into JVC is that cool” and he just kind of rolled his eyes and was like, well, “yeah, that's not an issue,” and, again, so he was a great support person. And it's funny. In times, since then, I was talking recently to a well-known Jesuit and we were talking about our connections with Jesuits at that point in Holy Cross and we both agreed how good, because Father Manning went on to be the provincial for the province, and how we both agreed how good he was in terms of just being generally supportive of people in general, including gay and lesbian people. So, certainly that was an important part. And also, too, one thing that I'm always grateful for is that Holy Cross allowed me to grow in my faith as a Catholic, but as a gay Catholic, and certainly in a lot of the work that I do now within the church around LGBT issues, so much of that I trace back to Holy Cross. And, you know, it's a real commitment to justice and finding God in all people. So yeah. And so, even though that wasn't an explicitly a gay support network, in a weird kind of way, I'm a better gay person as a Catholic and a better Catholic as a gay person. Okay, which I know when I say that to my local Bishop, he kinda just scratches his head you know, but, I mean, I really do attribute an awful a lot of that to my time at Holy Cross. *Coughs.*

Aiden: Once you did come out at Holy Cross did you feel there were any other students who reached out to you on campus who might have still been in the closet, or, we looked over a few of the other interviews when we were preparing for our own. And I—I know, so obviously no one's experience are the same, but someone mentioned how there was a group of people that everyone knew to be in the LGBTQ community even though they weren't openly out, everyone just kind of knew and they were accepted so no one really gave them a hard time. Do you have anything to add in that regard or no?

David: I remember having one or two friends who were gay in my senior year and I didn't—well, this is interesting now, but the two of them were dating, but they kept it all entirely off campus. And I—I was interested in one of them *laughs* and didn't realize that it was something like, 6 months or a year later, that I found out that the two of them were a couple and it's like, “oh, geesh, I'm not trying to break up a couple. *Laughs.* You know? But, I also remember, you

know, one of them saying to me, “well, God doesn’t like people like us.” And it was like so much internalized homophobia that that message, even though he himself wasn’t particularly Catholic or—certainly that message had been drip drip dripped to him that. And I said to him “you’ve been at Holy Cross for all these years and you still have that feeling?” and he was like, “well, that’s the way it is.” So, yeah, there was definitely, kind of like what you said in the other interviews with the quiet acknowledgement of people but still very much on the down low.

Aiden: Okay.

Kaitlyn: Did the Worcester community serve as a place where you could interact with the gay community? And I guess you could add Munich as well if you want, if you went to specific things that were for LGBTQ people at the time.

David: Yeah, I didn’t really—I wasn’t too involved within—I don’t know how much of the LGBT community there was in Worcester in, you know, 1981 when I was a senior. I mean, so much of so many things tend to be Boston focused. So, there were times that I would go to different things more in Boston just on my own than anything in Worcester. And, you know, in terms of Munich, there certainly were gay clubs and stuff like that. But I think that probably would not have gone to those gay clubs by myself because of the double issue of the cultural, language issues and then, you know, coming out as gay. It’s funny that one of the assistants in the program, I found out years later, was gay. And he and I chat occasionally on Facebook and that kind of thing. And it’s both, we both agree, and he was very much out in the Munich gay and nightlife, and we both agree that “it’s too bad we didn’t have those conversations that I wasn’t more out at that point” because, like I said the junior year program was really kind of a transitional period for me, and I if only I had been out more, that would have been very interesting to have seen what it would have been like have him have taken me around to introduce me to some of the gay clubs in Munich and stuff.

Aiden: So you mentioned how you had the two friends who were actually in a romantic relationship without you knowing. Did you have any of your own romantic relationships at Holy Cross or was this kind of a post-college experience that you had?

David: Yeah, I mean, I was open to it. But, outside of these couple guys I knew, I didn’t—I really didn’t know how to take the next step. So yeah, no, I didn’t have any relationships while I was there. It was really only after I moved down to this area that I did.

Aiden: Looking back, is there anything that you wish you had known at the time—so you mentioned that you wish you were a little more open during your junior year abroad—is there anything you wish you would have known even before junior year, or during your senior year that would have changed your experience at Holy Cross do you think?

David: Oh, for sure. Well, as I said, I do regret—I think I would have had a much fuller experience, the more traditional Holy Cross experience, if I had been on campus. If I could tell my 17-year-old self what I would like, I definitely wish I had had that. Just the fact, I mean, kind of—Dan Savage had that like “it gets better” campaign kind of thing. I wished that I had a mentor or someone as I was coming out, or even when, let’s say, I was a sophomore, I just wish that there had been some out resources that I could have taken advantage of and could have connected with more people. And that’s what I think so much of Holy Cross does now in terms of its Pride events. In the last fall, my husband and I stopped by the Digital Transgender Archive that Holy Cross has, and we were talking to Professor Rawson?

Kaitlyn: Yep.

David: K.J. Rawson, yeah, about that and just what a great signal that shows to students now. And I wish that I had more of that. *Laughs.* You know, every generation we learn, I mean, people are just coming out so much earlier than they were back in my teenage years.

Aiden: And so you are heavily involved with—well, we looked you up, not to creep you out or all. We did look you up to try to put a face before the actual interview, and we saw you were heavily involved in the LGBTQ church—I’m sorry, I’m not remembering the name of it right now—

Kaitlyn: In God’s Image.

Aiden: Yes, that’s it. And do you think that maybe your experiences here at Holy Cross and how you said you became a better gay as a Catholic and better Catholic as a gay man that you’re trying to become a mentor to these younger people who are now coming out earlier and transitioning or just to try to find a group of people together to feel comfortable within themselves?

David: Yeah, there’s definitely a strong component of mentoring and supporting the families, too. Because very often I say that when the kid comes out of the closet, the parents go into the closet, and so letting the families know that the kid is just the same as they always have been. And for the youth themselves, especially I try to do—I try to move the conversation along within

our diocese in terms of our schools. We're always very concerned about bullying in our schools. Our public schools do a great job with gay-straight alliances and all this kind of stuff. But, within our Catholic schools, we're really—unless you were in a Jesuit school—most Catholic, non-ordered schools would not have any kind of LGBT outreach where these kids feel welcome. You know, 40% of trans youth try to commit suicide. For our Catholic Church where we talk about being so pro-life, well, whose life are we pro? Either everyone has value, or no one has value. So, yeah, I do do a lot of work, but I also have to say, I do try to work within the framework of the Catholic Church and being respectful. As I say, I have a good relationship with our bishop. You might have heard last year we organized what we called the LGBT pilgrimage to Newark where Cardinal Tobin welcomed the LGBT community to the cathedral in Newark, which made the front page of the *New York Times*. So, to the degree that we can show that welcoming presence, both to mentor to the LGBT kids in the pew that say “Geez, maybe there’s a place for me within the church,” okay, but also as a witness of the Church to challenge the sin of homophobia that is through so many parts of our Church. It is very easy within a Jesuit environment, like Holy Cross or Jesuit parishes I know, where folks are—it’s like a bubble, kind of, just like Mount Saint James—but I don’t know, you guys might have grown up in Catholic parishes where there was never any mention, never any positive mention of any kind of LGBT role models, that kind of thing. So, yeah, I do a lot of work within the Church trying to help support where we can and build bridges, as Father James Martin talks about is building a bridge between the community and the Church. Yeah.

Kaitlyn: And, going off that question about your experience with the Catholic Church, do you think that the Jesuit identity and environment of Holy Cross affected your view of your sexuality? Early on in the interview, you said that you were mainly looking at Catholic colleges as well.

David: Yeah. When I chose Holy Cross, I knew about the Jesuits, only like there’s Jesuit Franciscans, Augustinians, God knows what else, I didn’t really know how deeply the Jesuits would impact my life. The whole idea of being “men and women for and with others” and the commitment to social justice, how important that would be within Holy Cross. Certainly, that influenced my decision to join Jesuit Volunteer Corps, too, which again, is very much a social justice-based group. So, yeah, the Jesuit component grew incredibly over my conscience, and I

think, even my time in Munich, I became more aware and more able to appreciate the Jesuit Catholic component of Holy Cross because I was in a public university.

Kaitlyn: Currently at our school, there is something going on, I don't know if you've heard about a religion professor doing the article about the "Jesus being the drag queen" and "Jesus is trans." There was a protest over the weekend both against that professor and there was a counter-protest as well. Do you just have any specific comment on that, or just how we are just so divided about both religion and the LGBTQ community?

David: *Coughs.* Hm. Yeah, I've heard a lot about it from a number of different people. I read the piece that was in the *Fenwick Review*. Is that what it's called?

Kaitlyn: Yes.

David: The original piece. My first thought when I read that piece was that these comments have gotten to be taken out of context. I believe that the College issued a statement that it was—the original thing was geared towards a particular group of—it was for a group of theologians or it wasn't designed for mass market communication. You know how it is, you can take any one statement and run with it.

Aiden: Yeah.

David: Yeah. That said, the statements are pretty, pretty out there. And I'm not sure that they really lead—by making statements like that, I'm not sure that really helps to build a bridge. So, I'm not sure what the benefit is, but, all of that said, I still kind of defer to wanting to know more about the context of the—in which it was written, because just random comments like that by a professor in an endowed chair, there has to be something more to it than what we've read so far. Well, can I say this? Well, Jesus was a sexual being. So, Jesus was gay, Jesus was straight, it doesn't really matter. You know, Jesus hung out with 12 men. Now, granted, you can say culturally, he was only going to be with men, that was only going to happen with men, it wouldn't work if he chose 6 men and 6 women to be his apostles. Maybe in that time, it wouldn't have. So, you know, I don't know if Jesus was gay or if Jesus was straight. None of it really matters. If someone perceives Jesus as a drag queen or drag king, however it was termed, if, somehow, that leads them closer to God, then have at it! God is bigger than all of us, you know. I remember I was with Father Jim Martin yesterday and one of his lines is "the good news is that there's a Messiah and the better news is that it's not you." *All Laugh.* I mean, it's like we get so

worked up on all of this stuff that doesn't really matter, but I do—I'm going to be curious to watch how the whole thing continues to develop with Professor... Liew?

Kaitlyn: Yes.

David: Is that his name, Liew? Yeah. It will be interesting to watch how—because it's a challenge for Holy Cross to maintain its Catholic and Jesuit identity while still being supportive of, you know, some issues that may not even be—aren't so traditionally acceptable in the Church.

Aiden: Thank you.

Kaitlyn: Thank you. We're going to do some reflective/looking back questions now. So, based on your experience, what advice would you give LGBTQ students who are struggling to come out at Holy Cross?

David: Hm. Take advantage of everything that you have that Holy Cross offers because you won't get that environment too often. And, again, I think sometimes we don't appreciate what we have until it's gone, you know? So, yeah, Holy Cross is probably, I would say an ideal place to come out and to work through those issues, whether with the Chaplain's office, with the PRIDE groups, whatever. So, yeah, take advantage of everything that you can there and use it to build constructively to know who you are as a person, where that's going to take you and don't shut out any doors. Like, my friend who said that God doesn't love or that God doesn't like people like us, make sure you understand that and talk that through to find out all the good stuff that you do have within you.

Aiden: Just kind of building off of that, for seniors who are now about to leave Holy Cross who are LGBTQ, do you have any suggestions for them about anything to [help with] the professional life and the transition to that?

David: Well, it's certainly a whole lot easier than in 1982 *All laugh* when I graduated. It's so much easier, in most industries and most parts of the country, to be out. So, be who you are but also be respectful of other people's opinions. Just because someone—it might be the first time, it might be the first time working with someone who really knows a gay person. We all have, no matter how enlightened, how tolerant we might want to consider ourselves, each of us is on a journey and each of us is learning. Just recently, I met a priest who was Polish from the other side, I don't know if you had any experience with, but my experience [was that] most Polish priests from Poland tend to be very, very conservative. And so, I dealt with him with that kind of

mindset on, you know, and then, little by little, I realized he was about as liberal and welcoming and as tolerant, and so, I had to step back and be like, here's a case where I prejudged him, you know, and because he's a Polish priest, he must be this, this and this. Well, I was the one who had the blinders on. And so, we always have to be open to, to that to learn that experience of grace at any time. Definitely make sure you stay involved with the LGBT community wherever you are and find those connections. If you are of—if you're Catholic, claim your place in the church. Your baptismal certificate doesn't have an asterisk on it. We are as much a Catholic as anyone else that tries to exclude you.

Kaitlyn: One final question to wrap things up.

David: Sure.

Kaitlyn: Can you share a story about a moment when being LGBTQ impacted your experience at Holy Cross or leaving Holy Cross? Or abroad in Munich, wherever you find this [question] will best fit?

David: *Pauses reflectively.* Well, I think one of the greatest gifts of being LGBT at Holy Cross, or at similar colleges, is when, let's face it, even today, folks who go to Holy Cross and environments like that are, and even if they get scholarships whatever, they are in an environment—Holy Cross provides an environment that very, very few people are able to take part in. Whether their families are affluent or whenever they are able to put together student aid or scholarships and all that kind of stuff, those four years are a real gift. As someone who always very conscious, as I said as the first generation to go to college, I was always very keenly aware how blessed I was to be able to be a part of Holy Cross and all that I learned from it and felt the need to give back. And that's where I considered my time in Newark teaching school in the middle of the projects to be an equally blessed time or I was able to continue to grow and learn, and by being, because I'm LGBT, I think I have just a heightened sensitivity of what it means to be the "other" and not to be accepted. If I had not been an LGBT, I'm not sure if I would not have chosen to go to JVC where it's very easy to just go on your merry way within society, taking advantage of everything that Holy Cross does offer. But we need to be appreciated that Holy Cross gives to us and recognize the gift of being gay or lesbian or trans, that it can help us to bring a new awareness in our lives and to be thankful for that and be appreciative of that and acknowledge it, if that makes sense.

Kaitlyn: No, it does.

David: Okay.

Aiden: And so, just a few just final touch-ups. You said you were here from '78 to '82.

David: Yeah.

Aiden: What was your major at Holy Cross?

David: Russian and German.

Aiden: Okay.

David: Double major.

Aiden: Your gender identity?

David: Male.

Aiden: Sexuality is...

David: Gay.

Aiden: Racial and ethnic background?

David: White, Irish.

Aiden: Current and/or former occupations?

David: Yeah, I worked in banking and then also retail management IT. I stopped working about 8 years ago. Both my husband's mother and my mother were sick with dementia, so we were taking care of them for a while. So, now, I guess, I'm retired.

Aiden: Very nice. Well, thank you for taking the time out of the day to be able to share your experiences with us.

David: Sure.

Kaitlyn: Yes, thank you very much. We appreciated your time and getting to know you.

David: Yes, it was a lot of fun. I hope it works well for you guys and your project.

Kaitlyn: It did.

Aiden: Yeah, it'll be great. Thank you.

David: Okay.

Kaitlyn: Yeah, we'll be keeping you up with the process and we will be sending you the written transcript just to make sure that you like everything that's in there or there's something that you, you know, don't want to be included in there, you can just feel free to let us know to take it out.

David: Okay. Perfect. I mean, I think I feel very comfortable with everything. You never know when you reread it and you go, "Did I really say that?"

All laugh.

David: Yeah. Perfect.

Kaitlyn: Alright. Thank you very much.

Aiden: Thank you. Have a good one.

David: Okay. Take care.

Kaitlyn: Alright. Bye.

David: Bye bye.