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Jeremy Yuan: So, my first question is going to be asking you to share your full name and you pronounce when and where were you born?

Tylir McKenzie: So, my full name now is Taylor J or Jaden. Mackenzie, it was just a piece for you to know, it was not the name I was born with. I go by Dr. T most frequently. Because, you know, it's become a colloquialism, or people just even teachers call me Dr. T, because it just stuck over the years. So, I was born in the US, but in Colorado, so Denver, Colorado, is where I grew up most of my life, but I've actually been in Washington now longer than anywhere else. And my pronouns, sorry, I always forget that. But part of the reason is that I use all pronouns. You know, I started "she," I transitioned, so I became "him," then things got blurry. So largely, I go by "they, them," because it's the easiest. But truly, what I tell people is I really don't care as long as it comes from a place of respect, right? But I think since I usually tell people, it's how you read me, obviously, with a goatee right now, people read me very masculine, so I tend to go by they & he. So, whatever you choose is fine by me. They really don't matter.

[00:01:28]

Jeremy Yuan: Cool, thank you so much. Could you tell me something about your family? Or maybe parents, like how many people are in your family and what kind of work they do?

Tylir McKenzie Sure. So, I'm an only child. So, my dad and my mom were very young. When I was born, they were 19 and 20. My mom later became a psychiatric nurse. So, you know, she had some amount of higher ed going into nursing. My dad is a master's in electrical engineering. And he was kind of, they got divorced when I was about four or five, five, I think. And so, they really did split apart. My dad went to the East Coast, and I stayed in Colorado, with my mom, but my dad's a very successful engineer now. And then both of them influenced my path, like, right, my educational path as well. My mom, this long been disabled. And that's

the one we'll just say, my mom's one that I just don't talk about much. But part of that is a lot of the history I've done in my work. But yeah, mostly, I'm an only child, small family. The other personal side, I'd say for you is like I do have a partner, right? Like, I think we're going on for almost 10 years. But it's, you know, a unique partnership. So that's always something that, you know, I got a lot out of is just breaking the norms and defining things differently. So, but yeah, that's the basics of me.

[00:03:12]

Jeremy Yuan: Thank you so much for showing your family's story in depth. And I really appreciate that. Where and when did you do your high school? Were you involved in any like activities while in school?

Tylir McKenzie: Oh sure. So where and when? I probably didn't tell you when I was born here. So, I was born in 1980, backing up to your question. So, I went to high school from 1994 to 1998, somewhere there. I was very active. I went to a very, very small school. And in the middle of the mountains that was predominantly white. Almost exclusively white. We were from a very small town. I mean, I was the 400 student, 441 student in the school. So, I mean, that's the whole school. It influenced a lot of what I did, right? But I still I played sports. So, you had to kind of keep in mind that I was identified female then. And so, you know, I played soccer. I was one of the only females who made the weightlifting, powerlifting team. I did skiing and banned. I mean, I kind of was involved in a lot of those things. And I played rec sports too, but soccer was always my sport, at least through high school. I was, I don't know if this is maybe oversharing. Or you can just tell me. I was never really in any particular group in high school. Because I was strong academically. So, you know, jokingly we would say I was a nerd. I played a lot of sports. So, I was a jock, like I didn't really fit in any one group. I also struggled a lot with mental health issues as a teenager. And some of that was probably related to my identity. So, I came out in high school, 17, my junior year, and my girlfriend and I were the first two openly gay students in my school. And

so, we definitely faced a lot of backlashes about that, right? So, like, at prom, like we were dancing together, and people would dance by us and say, oh, we should hang the queers from the rafters. Right. Like, that was still a very strong mentality. And yet, you know, I feel like it was it was good in the sense that, like, you know, I had to, we just lived, we had to live our life truthfully. But it didn't, it wasn't easy, right? I mean, it's very hard to be out in a culture that wasn't accepting of that, and still maintain who you are. So, but, you know, I mean, I was early Running Start before we had running start. So, I started college at 16. And while I was doing high school, it kind of blurred there too. And I had an opportunity to not be at high school all the time.

[00:06:23]

Jeremy Yuan: I'm sorry to hear that you overcame those tough moments. I sort of experienced the same situation when I was young when I was in China. Especially, when I was in my pre professional dental school, and, you know, like the LGBTQ plus topic, still not legalized and recognized in Chinese society. So yeah, it was also like, tough for me to be my true self. I'm glad that you made it to the present.

Tylir Mckenzie: I'm glad you did, too. Right. Like, I mean, that's just what it is like, it is a true story for a lot of us, when it is not seen as acceptable or valid, and even more so when it's directly oppressed. It can be dangerous to live your true life. Right. And, and it had some of that danger. But I think that I'm a firm believer that, you know, we can only be our true selves. And sometimes that means we have to change lots of things where we are, or who we are, like, I didn't know, I was trans at the time. Right. And so like, I think sometimes it's about when you follow your true, truest life, you know, it takes you places that maybe will honor that and not try and crush it out of you.

[00:07:54]

Jeremy Yuan: Yeah. I really appreciate it for you to share your personal stories that are so inspiring to me, though. So, I think my next question is gun shaped to your

experience at the University of Washington? Could you tell me like, when did you come to the University of Washington? Like what made you decide to pursue your PhD degree at the University of Washington?

Tylir McKenzie: Sure, sure. So, it's interesting, I did not follow a traditional path in school. And maybe this is kind of and it's just so you know, I am just this tip transparent as a teacher with my students too. So, I started college early, like I said, and I didn't know what I wanted to do. So, I worked on some of the gen ed credits, but I then got a full ride scholarship. Back in 98 to a local, not local, state liberal arts school. And I loved it there. I went to Fort Lewis College, which was in Colorado, in Durango, and I loved it. But I was only there for a year because my then girlfriend wanted to move back to Denver. I got accepted to Colorado School of Mines, which is one of the top engineering schools in the country. I could do engineering, but I hated it. I mean, I tell students all the time, like you can have the aptitude, the skill to do something. But if you don't have desire or passion, it just isn't going to work. And it didn't I failed out. So, I actually dropped out of my junior year of my bachelor's and a whole bunch of moves later and Alaska. I went to Job Corps. So, I mean, I learned trade skills. And so, then I ended up in Washington. And the truth is, I realized when I was about 27, that I needed to go back to school. I just it felt unresolved. So, I actually came to Highline. which is where I am now. Started my schooling back here and got all my credits consolidated. I actually graduated with an as an engineering because I couldn't get away from engineering. But then I transferred to CWU, which is on this campus to the remote campus, Des Moines. And I had so many credits in so many different ways that they were like, well, you should just do an Interdisciplinary Studies degree. And I was like, that sounds pretty great. Like I have never wanted to pick one thing. So, I did that. And I graduated. So, because I had all the credits, I graduated rather quickly for the through the first ones, right, so I got my AA and like, 2007, 2008, I got my bachelor's in 2009. And truth be told, it was a teacher at Highline, who said, I think you'd be a really good teacher. And I was like, I don't know, I've never really thought about teaching, you know. And, but I didn't know what else to

pursue, I knew I didn't want to do engineering anymore. So, I just kind of kept following this path. Like, I'm just learning, learn more, learn more, learn more. And so, when I got the bachelor's in interdisciplinary studies, I had found out that the University of Washington Tacoma had a master's in interdisciplinary studies. And I was like, that sounds like a good idea. I'm going to go get a master's at it. So, while I was working on my master's, I was still looking at other things. So, I actually had talked to us of all of this was at U DUB, Seattle, I had talked to the HCD program, right? So Human Centered Design and Engineering. Because I still thought that would be interesting as a kind of engineering kind of psychology. But I didn't want to pivot out of my master's to go to another master's at the time that when I finished my first year of my masters, I went and talked to Nancy Kenny, who was in the GWWS department, right? Since retired, I don't even know if she's around anymore, just sometimes. But Nancy was great because she was the chair at the time. And I just want to talk to her about it. Because the reason I ended up there, it was I took a class and Hila Janeiro taught feminists understanding of violence or something like that, I can't remember the exact name of the class. And I took it in my master's, right, so I came up and took a class in GWSS. And I talked to Nancy, because I was like, well, maybe I should just switch out of my master's and do my PhD. Just focus on my PhD here. Because my research then was looking at, I did actually do this for my masters, my master's research was looking at female perpetrated violence, and why we don't even acknowledge it in the literature. And I really strongly took a feminist perspective from that because they were the only ones who really talked about violence in general, in that way, right? Physical violence, sexual violence. So, I was kind of drawn for that reason. And I decided not to transfer to mid masters. So, I finished my master's degree down at Tacoma and wrote my thesis on what I did. And I applied to get into GWSS for the PhD, and specifically working to do this the research. So, in my master's, I had proposed a research study I could do for my PhD. And so that was really my proposal. When I applied. I actually didn't get in the first. Like, right away. I was on the waiting list. And that was tough

because I didn't have a backup plan. I didn't really know what else I was going to do. And luckily, take out your will somebody didn't accept. And so, I was admitted. Originally, I was admitted to work with on hula, and still kind of focus on that kind of sexual violence side of things, but I was also doing my own therapeutic work. And it became, in all honesty, just too much to do it all the time. I started TA, and I learned about pedagogy. And I fell in love with the idea of not just teaching but like the scholarship of teaching, right? How do we be better teachers? How do we design better work? How do we interrupt traditional forms of learning? And that's kind of where that feminist perspective came in. So, I really turned to feminist pedagogy. So that's how I ended up by so What happened is right, I ended up changing chairs. And I don't remember, I think I changed chairs in the first two quarters, I was there. So pretty early. Rebecca Anirudh was working in grad school at the time, as well as teaching us. And so, I was her TA. And I approached her if she would be my chair, while I focused on this idea of kind of pedagogy. And so that's kind of where and how I ended up, like, in the midst of the GWAS department. But I'll stop there, because I want to make sure if you have specific questions that I don't just answer them as I ramble.

[00:15:41]

Jeremy Yuan: I really appreciate that. I think that was pretty clear to me at this moment. One thing really stands out to me based on your sharing is the feminist pedagogy that you were so interested in, from a dancer’s perspective, and also based on my research interests, that I'm challenging the traditional gender norms in dance education. So as a master’s student, the graduation requirement for us is not to write a thesis is to design a curriculum. Yeah. So, for my curriculum, I am changing the traditional gender norms in Chinese dance. So, I started it from Chinese dance, the movement practice and then incorporate, like gender issues in Chinese dance, which I was using the research findings that I got from research into this course. And then I also incorporated history, some anatomical matters, and the human body. And then my goal was to change the way how people

traditionally teach Chinese dance. So, your experience really stands out as a beacon to me.

Tylir McKenzie: I would agree, I think there's a mirror in kind of the desire of how we approach things, right? Like, I, while my degree is, like sitting here staring at right now on the wall, right? It says, you know, feminist studies, and, and that means so many different things to so many different people. Right? And maybe this is perhaps why I understand why Priti sent you to my direction. You know, one of the big things is, is I've always kind of pushed back against the norms, no matter what they've been in. And it made sense that when I suddenly got interested in education, I was like, okay, how do I push back against the norms? And, you know, so really, and truly, you know, I started to really follow those type of classes. So not just feminist, but like, I went to the College of Ed, and took a number of classes over there, like looking at trying to think of which ones I took all sat on top my head, but, I mean, I did, of course, ed psych, but then I also did, like, I think it was called something to the effect of like, equity in education. You know, I mean, like, looking at different ways that we, we've always traditionally put students in school and, and the requirements that we've had and like, like, why some students will fail, and some will succeed, because of kind of that, like, if we gave them a different opportunity, would they be successful? Are they only not succeeding because of this, this norm that's been in place? And, you know, I think that is a really admirable thing for you to do, because you're not just challenging. And I don't want to say simple, but you're not just challenging the simple idea of like, oh, let's like interrupt gender roles and dance, but more specifically, you're challenging cultural norms that go with that. And so, the complexity that you're weaving and the fact that you're pulling from all these different places, and educating and like, you know, looking at feminist studies, but also the idea of feminist studies is kind of being like, critical of like, dominant narratives, right? You're an interdisciplinary and even though or maybe I want to say, even though, you're an interdisciplinary dancer, and that's, that's really cool, to think about how you're integrating those things. So, you know, it's hard because people hear the

term feminist studies and I think there's a very strong assumption about what that means. And some of that is because the public narrative around feminist has been crafted, culturally here in the US and other places. And it took me a while for myself to identify even really truly, as like a feminist pedagogist, this because I was like, what does that? What does that really mean? Or what does that represent? And what I finally kind of came to was like, well, as I interpret what feminism means and what feminist pedagogy means, I interpret it to mean looking for intervention, looking for breaking traditional norms and barriers. And to me, that's what feminist pedagogy means, right? I believe in equality, equity, I believe in students' experience having a profound role in how they show up to our classrooms. And I don't think it matters what field I happen to teach psychology. I'm not a psychologist, in the traditional way of understanding that, but I am a pedagogist. And so, I focus so much of my time, studying the art of teaching, I just happened to end up start studying it in terms of psychology. But the applicability of it is that I genuinely feel it can go any direction, because we all can do it. It's just how we engage with that information and how we utilize it in what we're doing. So, it was hard, like, you know, I'm not sure looking at your questions, I'll kind of answer a little bit of that, too. But it wasn't easy all the time to be working in feminist studies because people would ask me, and I imagined to be fair, that people probably respond the same way to us saying that you're working on a PhD in dance instruction, right? That they're like, well, what exactly does that mean? Because culturally, we have an expectation of like, oh, well, you should be aiming for this high job or this thing. And if you say, well, I'm getting a degree in teaching, or I'm getting my degree in dance, like people don't know how to grab onto that the same way and recognize it for the challenge and elevation that it really is. And so, I think that one of the things that I got out of being in GWSS was really getting to, to be on the outside and see that which made me more passionate about changing, right. So, but keep asking your questions, because I'll ramble. So, I have more I can fill in but whatever you want.

[00:22:44]

Jeremy Yuan: I mean, you definitely answered all my questions. I was going to ask you; how do you identify what is feminist study? And how? How did the thought of feminism pedagogy come to you, but you sort of answer that question, and you really make me think that I found out I reached out to the right person? And

Tylir McKenzie: I mean, it works out that way. Right. I mean, sometimes we're lucky that we land that. The other things I do have a couple of things I can add to that for you, which is, it's hard. I'm in academia, right? So like, I am an academic. I've taught it. My biggest sense. I mean, I taught at all of the schools I graduated from, which is a really cool thing to get to say I don't think most people would be able to say like, cool. I graduated from Highline, I graduated from CWU, I graduated from UW Tacoma, UW Seattle, I've taught at all of them. And they're all very different levels of education, very different schools. You know, my five years at UW Tacoma, in psychology, gave me the experience of teaching psychology. But I struggle against that in academia because my degree doesn't lead to a PhD in psychology. My degree reads feminist studies. And so, trying to get a job in psychology, so I'm tenure track. Finally, after 12 years, you know, I'm one year away from getting tenure. And but it took a lot of fight to be seen as valid, because my degree is undefinable in some ways, right? Like, I have to really argue, here's my experience. Here's my education. Here's the things I've done because on the surface, you know, people are going to look at, okay, your degree is in feminist studies, that's even different than saying your degree is in Gender Women and Sexuality Studies. Right? And because somehow, they have very different meanings like a of course but I would assume, Oh, if you're in gender women and Sexuality Studies, you're probably a feminist, or you're probably queer or something, right? There's always that little bit of an assumption there. But like to, say feminist studies is different, people react very differently to that. So, you know, it's not been the easiest path, career wise, right? Like, I've had to really fight for it, and really kind of prove the value of what feminist pedagogy brings to the field. And, you know, I was an outsider, even in GWSS to some

degree, because my research became research on teaching. And so, I didn't travel places, I mean, I didn't work with, you know, specific demographics, I literally did an entire dissertation on myself. And I was lucky enough to find a methodology that supported that, because otherwise, I was really stuck. I fell in love with teaching. And really, that's what I wanted, you know, and I got lucky enough to find that entire field. And as somebody who's looking at instruction, I'm going to give you an interesting field to look at, which is called the self-study of teacher education practices, or s step. It's not going to be exact to you just like it wasn't exact to me, because a lot of it looks at K through 12 educators. But what it is, is an entire group field of people who focus their attention on what I am doing? What is my pedagogic process? And how can I make that better? So that's the self-reflective part. And I was like, this is amazing. Like, this is what I do every day. I am always thinking about, like, I just got done with teaching before I came to talk to you, right? And I'm like, all right, like, it's midway through the quarter, what's working, what's not like? That is who I am as an educator, and to find that there were at least groups of people who thought that way. That's, you know, ultimately, what I tell you that I should have probably become an Ed. D in education, maybe. But the truth is, I'm very grateful for my feminist, my feminist teaching, because stuff that I didn't even think would apply, I really did. And I'm like, okay, I learned that it won't really apply. It really did in the end, like now, you know, I'm in a place where we're fighting, and I had to bring in Bell Hooks, or I have to, you know, reference a lot of that stuff. So, I wouldn't change it per say, like, I'm grateful I got the experience. You know, my, you can look up the name of my dissertation, I can't even actually wait a second. I think I even have it. It's really sad. I don't remember at this point. But I have a, you know, when you actually have your own printed copy that still sits there. So, let's see, what was it called? Sometimes I read it, I'm impressed that I wrote that. Well, at one point in my life, “praxis in the trenches,” you got it. So, you know, it really was just looking at it like I had invented these different ways of teaching. I had invented a self-reflective assignment, that I then evaluate it, because I had used it so many

times over five, six years, I'd used it at different schools, I'd use it at different class levels. That was my research. I didn't even know that I was sitting on it the whole time. But you know, as somebody like you who's interested in teaching, and particularly your desire to both investigate and interrupt, right, because we have to do both, right? Like, we have to know what the rules are or what the norm is, first. And then we had to say, Okay, where's the intervention? Where am I going to step in and make that change? And then if we're really good teachers will also say, how do I evaluate if that's an effective change? Right. And so, you know, as you're moving through stuff, especially as you're really talking about pivoting and shifting these narratives, and how it's taught and the ways it's doing it, one thing that always kind of keep in mind, too, is how would you evaluate if that's worked? Or if that has done what you have envisioned your hope for it to do? Right. And I think you'll get that you're doing the methods, right? Is that what you're doing? Right now, is that the class? What's the class that you're

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Jeremy Yuan: The class that I designed, it's combining my research and also more practice, and history, and many different topics that eventually made it innovative. Other than, like others and their ways in teaching Chinese dance.

Tylir McKenzie: That's what you're working on for your Master's right now. That's your kind of thesis. Okay. And then so how did you end up in? Can I ask how did you end up in this, like this class that you're doing the interview for, like, what drew you to that?

[00:30:40]

Jeremy Yuan: So, the reason that I wanted to take this course because I really want to reinforce my research skills, specifically, the interviews, how to conduct interviews, because I personally, really, like draw inspirations from personal histories. And that's why I conducted my research, oral history with 10 gay men, and to figure out what is going on in Chinese stance at present, even though I conducted oral

history interviews last year, but I didn't think that I was good enough. In this specific research methodology, I wanted to re-learn everything from the beginning again, and really figure out the benefits from this specific methodology. And in order for me to be a strong person, strong scholar, who can really transfer the personal histories, find a subject that I'm interested in research in the future, and to help them speak up, and then to bring out all those voices from our individuals.

Tylir McKenzie: I mean, I'm with you. Methodology is always one of the more challenging pieces, right? Because I will also say, as somebody who's, like, when we're in the arts, or when we're in like, even, you know, GWSS, or when we're, when you're in an outsider field, for lack of a better way of putting it, right. We're not, we're not engineers, we're not going into English. Right, we're kind of on the outskirts. So, the things we're doing, one of the things that comes with that is this kind of slight need to make sure that we have like strong methodology. And in part, because there's always a little bit of that narrative around us that says somebody's going to criticize this. Right, that, it's like, we're already pushed to the boundaries of kind of the validity of what we're doing, even though you and I can both say, we all know it's absolutely valid. But it could be judged as like, not as good or not as important, right. And so, I think sometimes we look for the things that helped make it valid in the way the rest of the culture would, right. So, like having a strong methodology, like I, what you just said to me was like, I wanted to make sure that I was this right. And that idea of having to be sure comes from that, like, I want to make this defensible in a good way. Like I wanted to have proof that I'm not just having an opinion, that I've done these things to help show how valid it is. And I think that's great. But I also just want to put that bug in your ear that some of the reason we do that is because we're already pushing against that kind of cultural dominant narrative, even in like, you're doing it in multiple layers, right? Like, that's what's kind of like, and I did, too, it's like, it was not just this layer or this layer. It's like every move you're making, you're trying to break through and create a new way of kind of having people see difference as valid. And so, I think

it's great that you came over to the side because I think that, again, you don't have to be quote or unquote, staunchly feminist in order to genuinely use this kind of feminist process or principle of disruption. Right? Like, that's what we're really about. We're about disruption, we look at things and we're like, that doesn't seem like the only way something could be done. It's not even like saying it's wrong. It's saying, why is that the only way and I got a lot of that, like the way I'm speaking to you now would not have happened. Had I not done my feminist studies work, right. Like I'm very impassioned about those things because I gained Did that skill? Throughout my studies, I am still an outsider even in GWSS, like, I'm pretty sure if you asked, and you owe a little copy and say, you can cut this out of anything you write, but I'm pretty sure if you asked pretty, she would tell you that I was an outsider. Because I was, I functioned very differently. I focused on things very differently. I'm sure there's at least three reasons popping in my head why she was told you go talk to Tyler, because when you emailed me, I was actually really surprised. Because my time in the department was not perfect. I am, I pushed back on a lot of things. And I, I have always felt like I wasn't necessarily welcomed either in that. But to have her recommend that you talk to me actually made me feel different about that, right? Like, perhaps I've judged myself instead of really, that it's not the way that's been, I think I'm appreciative of the moment to reflect with you as well. So, in what a part of what I'm saying is like, I think this kind of work, the kind of methodology you're talking about, right? We have this idea of what makes a good researcher, the part of what feminist studies offers you is an idea that good research can be a lot of different things, and storytelling and oral histories. I mean, you've got me just in your questions and getting to talk to you has gotten me to really think about things for myself, like, wow, I never really realized how valid that could be. So, one of the things that you get out of the methodology you're using is human connection. Right? You're not doing this, from a purely observer standpoint, you've told me parts of your story, which has allowed me to talk about mine. And I think that's what feminist studies and oral histories and even pulling from like that insider

outsider, kind of, like we're both insiders in certain ways, right? Like, together, we'd be inside of being queer and wanting to be teachers, right, we could be in our own bubble in that little category, but then we also have our own. And I think that that is what I get. And that is what I think it, I hope it would offer you to is that there's ways to always draw more connections. And I think you've done a great job in asking that. But yeah, sorry, asked me if there's anything else that I missed. So, and you also just so you know, you can follow up with me anytime, like, if you're like, oh, I'd really like to have clarity on that question. I didn't get it because Dr. T was rambling too damn much. You can always ask too.

[00:37:49]

Jeremy Yuan: I think everything you were saying is clear to me. And it just makes me feel like so sweet that we are sharing the same aspiration. And even though we are in different fields, now, but still share the same aspiration. It really makes me want to keep standing for myself and keep going to the direction that I chose, like, change the norms and figure out what is going on to disrupt, interrupt the stereotypical norm or understanding and how to enrich my pedagogy like in Dance Education later on. Yeah, I really appreciate that. All your sharing that is so inspiring to me personally, since you were sharing your story in the department. So, I think I'm going to bring your attention back to your experience in a little bit of depth with the department at GWSS. If there's something that you don't want to share just let me know.

Tylir McKenzie: I don't mind sharing it with you. It's more that like, I am sharing it with you is one thing, sharing it in such a way that I would be very careful to not necessarily talk poorly about the department in a way that would be publishable is what I'm saying. So, I'm fine. I'm fine talking with you about it. And it's no secret it's so you know, it was hard for me in GWSS because I didn't fit right away. It's interesting because I didn't come in with a gender studies background per saying. I didn't come in with women's studies or sexuality studies. You know, my degree coming in was Interdisciplinary Studies. Now, I study psychology, I studied

sociology. You know, I worked across the board in a lot of different ways, but like, I came in not having that knowledge. So, like I was green, coming into feminist studies, I didn't know the author. I didn't know the history. So, I had a lot of catching up to do. I have, fortunately, or unfortunately, my personality seems to be a bit of a troublemaker. And I say that in the best of ways, too. I always am somebody who will ask, why about things? Why are we doing a process this way? You know, why does it have to be in this particular order? Or? Why does why is this the best practice? And it's not because I, for me, it's not because I'm actually doubting it, it's that I like to understand why something is happening. It's just how my brain works. And unfortunately, that can kind of come across to some people as like, I'm questioning them or like, I'm just being resistive. You know, I had my cohort, we had a good cohort, you know, but I'll be honest, a lot of our cohort. I don't I'm not even sure who finished and who didn't, to be honest. I think Shawn finished after me, maybe I mean, we were strong in the beginning as our cohort in the department. But then, as time went on, man, it was harder and harder, I think genuinely, some of it is because a very small department means that there is always some amount of attention and awareness of one another, right? If you weren't really huge psych department, like, you might be in a lab with one person, and that's what you're doing. And nobody else has any real interactions with you. But GWSS, being so small, and I'm going to imagine it translates the same to dance education, like when you're in a very small field. Like, I never even took, I don't even think I took Priti for a class. Right? But Priti knew me and knew of me, right. So like, that was a good thing. Because I think I did better in small ways. It was a challenging thing, because I'm always looking to learn more and do more, and that wasn't always received. Well, I also fell in love with teaching over research. And, you know, I ended up teaching outside of UW, I mean, I was still teaching and my position, but I started full time teaching outside of UW. Like I told you, I didn't have a project. Once I got away from doing research on sexual violence, which I just, I just couldn't do anymore. You know, once that was my first year. I had already changed the topic to pedagogy. But there were only a

couple of people who genuinely did pedagogy in the department. It's not to say they didn't teach with feminist principles, or that they you know, I mean, in fact, at the time, there was only one person in the beginning, who did specifically feminist pedagogy. So, it was just, it wasn't as clean or as easy or as supportive. I ended up severely in debt because of it too. Right. Every year, I had to take out loans. So, every year I didn't finish my dissertation. You know, I was racking up more loans. So, I think, you know, you asked about the name change and other things. And what I'll tell you is this I, at least during my tenure, in GWSS trans individuals did not necessarily feel supported, but I can tell you that if you look at who's struggled and who ended up taking on more years and things like that, or change chairs, I think you'd find a pattern in terms of trans men, in particular for gay men second. And all of us who were in those identity groups at the time, and around had conversations about that. That, while it was a Gender and Sexuality Studies Department, the truth is, it was still very much a Women's Studies department. You know, and while the name changed, I think at the time, I can't speak to the last couple years, I haven't been around, I don't know. But at least during the time I was, which was 2011 to… I have to look at my own degree to remember, 19th. So, eight years, right? At least in those eight years, it was hard to be trans and or gay and male.

[Audio interruption 00:46:30]

[00:46:48]

Tylir McKenzie: Or I could learn it as a Ph.D., but I'm not really represented in it. You know, and I think a lot of us felt that way. Which is unfortunate. I mean, it can happen in a small department, it can happen even in the Pacific Northwest, which is, you know, very supportive of queer culture. But I, you know, that's honesty. That's, you know, I try hard not to talk super negative, because I have a great career in the end. And I learned a lot. And I personally grew a lot, even though the fight, like some of my growth, was that fight? Right? Do I think it could have been

better as an experience? Sure. But I would say that you could probably talk to most anybody in a PhD program, anywhere. And they would probably tell you the same thing. Right? Like I don't, I don't know that it's a condition of GWSS so much, it's just a condition of academia. Honestly. I think I got a little idealistic, right, I think it's easy to, to idolize and say, oh, love Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies, like that includes me, I should be really present in that space. And I think that may just be your own, like, first idea versus, like, the reality of what academia is, if that makes sense.

[00:48:20]

Jeremy Yuan: Regarding the name changed for the department. How do you think about, like the transformation of woman study into GWSS.

Tylir McKenzie: Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies?

Jeremy Yuan: Yeah, yeah. Like, transformation?

Tylir McKenzie: I mean, there was, you know, it's interesting, because, you know, I think you would find that most people were supportive of it in general. By name changing. It didn't necessarily curricular change. I mean if you were to look at the classes we offered, at least. They had just changed the GWSS when I started. So, we still had people who came who were in the program. From women's studies now into GWSS, I was very aware of a lot of that. In fact, like I said, In the beginning, I had talked to Nancy, me a year before I joined, and it was still women. So, I think one of the biggest differences is that the name changes for a lot of people felt very superficial, that it was a way to try to denote new in inclusivity. But I don't feel like the curriculum at the time was changed to meet that, if that, if that makes sense. So, for example, we only had one intro to Queer Studies course. So, if you're going to talk about sexualities, you can't have an entire program that says, we have one class on sexuality. Right? You know, and gender you know, it's, it's kind like gender kind of got used, but then why would you say gender women? Right, like, I it was, it still is I would imagine a contested slash complicated, split feeling about it. You know, I, I will say I would probably focus on it more than

most people. Right. But take, for example, I'm a trans person, and I taught on sexualities. So of course, I'm going to be more hyper focused on what's not being discussed, you know, put yourself as a female identified individual, and feeling like you're very present in the literature or the conversations. I feel like you wouldn't have the same feelings. Does that make sense?

[00:51:34]

Jeremy Yuan: Yeah, but I think that's all good. Because your illustration gives me a better understanding about the program, and also really expands my view of what is woman's study, what is GWSS study, so you really have to understand all those complexities.

Tylir McKenzie: You'll and you'll find, honestly, Jeremy, you'll find, find tons of schools call it different things, right? Like, some schools will call it gender women studies, some schools will call it just sexuality studies, some schools will still stick to women's studies.

[Audio interruption 00:52:23]

[00:52:52]

Tylir McKenzie: I love academia. I'm a teacher. But I think it's deeply flawed in the way that we name and silo and do those things. And I genuinely think feminist studies, women's studies, GWSS, is no exception to that, I think, you know, is despite wanting to be an outsider or an intervention, or whatever, I think, unfortunately, the institution of academia is still so big and so strong, that the sides going, Oh, we're different. But you're still under that same umbrella. And so, I think you can only be so different. So disruptive, so whatever, before you become not in not wanted. So right, there's, there's always a little bit of that strategic part of academia, the longer I've been in it, the more cynical and jaded I am. So, forgive the fact that at 13 years, I've gotten a little more jaded about academia, not the teaching part. But definitely about the institution of other things. Anything else?

[00:54:11]

Jeremy Yuan: I really appreciate your perspective. In my personal opinion, I really think that you are an expert in this specific field. Thank you. And pedagogy, stuff like that. So, I have a few more question on your opinions and your perspectives on the future generations, like as a feminism studies scholar, what do you see are the most pressing feminist issues today?

Tylir McKenzie: Oh, that's a very good question. I mean, I think the strongest feminists, as part of me would say that we're in the US at least, right? We're losing women's rights, and that had been long fought for. So, I think, you know, feminist studies and GWSS as departments didn't exist. Even. I mean, I think the first ones were in the 70s. Don't quote me on that because I don't quite remember. But institutionally, I think it was right. In that era, when civil rights were coming along, and things like that. And we, you know, they fought, and they fought, and they built in the built in the built in like that energy that was present definitely is what, you know, my degree was kind of built on, right, like we got to that point. And I think we hit a point where there were a lot of successes. And because of that, there were more people who may have joined in or become a part of that movement right now, because it was gaining momentum. And I'm speaking students, right to interests in topics. I would say that I have a lot of concerns, presently. I think that the kind of work that feminist scholars do, and are social justice scholars more broadly, is a very heavy emotional labor. And I think that there's a high potential for burnout right now. Because, you know, we were doing great able to spread our wings, able to research new things and, and grow and annex literally expand, like, you know, more schools, more research areas, more things. And now all of a sudden, it feels like it's getting crushed down. I mean, look at all the programs and schools that are losing DEI. And that alone targets, feminist studies, right? It targets, Queer Studies, it targets anything that is seen as diverse, because it's trying to say, well, no, we shouldn't teach specifically about that. So, I am just being really honest, I don't know. I don't know how I feel about future generations. I would say in some ways nervous, because, you know, it's going to be on their shoulders, even more

than mine, to try and push back and fight for change again. I'm concerned that, you know, think I'm thankful that at UW. And being locationally where we're at, I don't think our department GWSS would be in any danger, per say. But there's a risk, right, there's a risk with being in a very discursive and controversial department. Right? It's not math. It's not engineering, it's not computers, it's not English. It's a very specific department that has a very specific tie to social and cultural things. And because of that, I think it can always be at risk. My hope is, however, that there are people who are like I was in my late 20s, who are feisty and willing to advocate and be an activist and continue to, like, you make change and look at differences and, and stand up for difference. And I'm doing that still, and the generation above me are getting ready to retire. You know, I mean, as a funny joke, I just found out as soon as the next person retires, which is in June, I will now be the oldest person in my department, which I'm 44 I'm not profoundly old, but there is a change in generations. Right. So now, I think, I think it's maintained itself since the 70s. I think that we've screwed up enough things in the US that were that feminist studies is still needed. Because I've always said, if, as feminist scholars, we do our job to perfection, and we make were able to make the changes that we genuinely want to make, we would have no reason for our jobs. Right. And so, you're also looking at a field that is very tied to the fight, right? I mean, part of what feminist studies needs is the fight against, I forget always how to say it, hegemony. Um, and so I think that that can produce its own kind of tension. But right now, I'll really say like, when I graduated, I was like, well, you know, we're doing so well. And perhaps that, you know, in the future, we won't need GWSS, we won't need this particular, you know, advocacy. Fast forward post COVID. Now, in 2021 2223 204, I feel differently. I feel like there's still a good argument for it. But I think we may need to re-evaluate how we fight, and what we do and how we spread out and connect. Because, you know, right now, GWSS was very siloed as its own little niche of something yet, most scholars in GWSS are very diverse, like, none of us researched the same thing at all, right. And so, I think that diversity is really good. But it can sometimes also mean that

you don't have as much camaraderie or strength to fight against that. So, I think it could go either way. I'm hopeful that it continues to be a voice against this kind of, but the changes that are just oppressive, no matter who you are. I've always said that you know whether or not you identify within the binary for example, you know, identify female, or identify male, if people in the middle are given more grace to be on any of that to be non-binary or androgynous. It offers people in the binary, more flexibility as well. I'm, I like to say that I'm a hopeful, optimistic existentialist, Neonist. In other words, I overthink everything that has hope, even when I shouldn't, and largely accept that the world is going to be how the world is. But I believe Jeremy, I do, I think the fights are still valid, I think, doing the things you're doing, which is like, I want to look at things differently, I want to talk about them differently. I think that's still needed. And I will always believe that, because if we don't change, we're stagnant. If we're stagnant, we die. So, you know, I just kind of go from that standpoint, that it's always worth the fight. You get tired sometimes, and it's lonely, sometimes. And it's targeted, sometimes. But I think we find our people. And I think we find people; I have a number of colleagues. They're not feminist studies, colleagues, they don't know the books I have sitting on the shelf behind me. But you know, what we talk like, we have the same kind of desire and fire and argument. So, I think that you find people who speak your language, regardless of where they come from, you know, who have the same visions, or at least desire for change that you do. And I think that's what makes the difference. Departments, you're there for your degree, and then you're done. But you make connections, and you find people and you take classes that you don't expect to take that put you in touch with other things. And I think that's the beauty of what we do. It has both sides. But I always want to believe in what the good is. I mean, it's just kind of always been my way of the world sucks. And sometimes you just have to be happy and not happy. But just be like, you know what, I'm just going to keep doing what I can do, and I'm going to keep being me. And that's why I became a teacher. Honestly, I found out that I really love teaching. And I'm not you know, part of what feminist pedagogy teaches us is that

we're not the sage, we're not the one who wants to tell people information. Instead, we're the ones who say, I got some knowledge. I'm happy to share it with you. But I'd really like to know what you think or what your experiences are and bring those into. And you know, one thing you should know for me is teaching here at Highline now. We have the largest diversity of students in any college in the state. My classrooms are, I mean, I have students from 16 to 60. I have predominantly running stars. So, a lot of high school. I have tons of international and immigrant students, tons of ELL and ESL students. So, you know, I've got an opportunity to interact with people from all over the world, with all their experiences with all of their culture and all their history. And I think it makes a big difference. I also talk very much like that because I went to Vietnam in September. And it profoundly changed me. It taught me a lot about being what it feels like to… you know, being a white person in Vietnam, you're not. It's not like going to Europe, I went to Europe, I didn't mean I mean, the language might have been different. But going to Vietnam, I experienced what it was like to stand out to very clearly, very easily be seen as not from here. Now, did I feel poorly in Vietnam? No, no, like, I mean, that's what was so moving. But it made me realize how my students must feel. Right. And I very much took in the eye. But all of my feminist background is why I could do this. Does that make sense? Like, I wouldn't have even asked these questions or thought about these things, had I not had that background. And instead, here I am, and I'm in Vietnam. And I'm like, I would love to be able to communicate with you. And I feel bad that I kicked, right. Like, I want to learn from you, and I feel bad that I can't learn, and I was like, holy crap. Like if this is a why students are going through with the weight of like, being away from 1000s of miles away from your family, or, you know, being here on a very strict visa, or all those different things. I was like, I'm here for a week on a guided tour with my other people from Highline. Imagine if you're alone, and it changed the way I taught. And so, I think feminist studies opened me up to always knowing that like, there are other experiences that will change how you view the world. And I am much more open to not just hearing about them, but

genuinely soliciting them, right, trying to seek them out. So, I can grow as a human being. And so, I can teach my students to grow as well. And I do think I got that a lot of that from GWSS, maybe not in the classroom, maybe not from one particular person. But maybe from the overall experience of just learning to question everything and welcome. The things I don't know, welcome experiences outside of myself, which I think deep down, I was probably always like that, but I think it like gave me permission to do that. So, I am sorry, I ramble a lot, but I'm not sorry. I'm not going to say sorry. I ramble. And I love to talk about this stuff.

[01:07:33]

Jeremy Yuan: You were not. You're seeing everything that I just can't agree more. So, I have to say that you're definitely the most beautiful human being that I've ever seen. I mean, words cannot express how lucky I am to have a conversation with you. And you just inspired me that and encouraged me to…

Tylir McKenzie: Keep fighting the fight?

Jeremy Yuan: Yeah, exactly. Totally like that.

Tylir McKenzie: Jeremy, if it means anything, it does go both ways. Whenever I get to talk like this, it really inspires me for the things I do. And because sometimes it's very easy to get bogged down by all the details of life. I mean, you're a PhD student, it's not easy, right? Like you're got more school and more classes in there, it's easy to get bogged down, but I do believe that we are, I believe we are granted opportunities to make connections like this, that bring at least for me, it's, it's that's what I meant it's dimensional, it's both ways. Like, I find you to be a beautiful human being for the fact that like, you're willing to look at culture and like intense cultural gender roles. And say, you know, I think that I want to see how to disrupt that. And like, that is like mind blowing to me. So please know that it goes both ways that you inspire as much as you get inspired. And my other side is to say this, you go to Colombia, stay in touch with me anytime. As a teacher, I love meeting people who are passionate about what they do. And I've been doing this for a while and sometimes you feel alone because you know, you're you are one

of the few who are very vocal about this kind of change and difference, and you can hit walls and barriers like I've been frustrated this year. Because I just feel like I'm like, okay, we keep talking about change, but nothing's happening. You know, and, and sometimes we need to be able to have those community of people who it's like, yeah, today, you know, this was hard right now, but like I'm, I feel very inspired because I'm like, Shit, like, here's Jeremy's going to like, interrupt, okay, all right, like, I got to get back on the ball because like, you know, it is a reason to feel, to feel that from you and be like, wow, like, I've lost. Not entirely, but like, when you're tired and things are rough in your teaching, it's like, I've lost a little bit of that spark for me, and getting to talk to you reminds me why I got into doing all this in the first place, and like how I feel about it. And so, I'm very grateful. You know, for whatever reason, and pretty in the universe color we will that it was recommended, but like, I am very grateful to know you and meet you as well. And I genuinely mean what I say when it's like, anytime you want to pop on a zoom, you want to talk about teaching, you want to talk about things just reach out, like, I'm happy to give you my number, like, it's what we do. There's, I think there's a lot of us out there, but we're very scattered in different places in different locales. And I mean, it's funny because I'm, I'm pleased, forgive me, I'm a little emotional today, too, because my grandmother is dying. And so like, I carry a lot of feelings outside right now for things and she was my queer, my queer grandma, she's wandering took me to my first Pride and, and saw me for me, so like, it's very close to my heart right now. And I just liked the idea of dance. And what you're doing is just amazing to me, too, so. So please, please, please, keep doing you. And no matter what walls you face, or the challenges you are like, you have at least got one supporter in your corner. So, you know, I do. I do think it's amazing what you're doing. And I would love to hear about how that turns out for you. Because it's really fucking cool, man. Like, just to be honest, you don't have to type that up if you don't want to, but I'm just going to say it that way. Right. So yeah. Thank you!

[01:12:04]

Jeremy Yuan: Thank you so much. I really appreciate it is okay. And I love to see people getting emotional. And that makes us even more real, that’s the true part of us.

Tylir McKenzie: Yea. You're not you're not a statue, you know, you're not a robot talking. It's like I do. I'm very emotional right now and like to, like, you have a light right now that I have to tell you just personally, I'm like, and my other friend showed up out of nowhere. Like, I've been very down and so to see people with a little light, like it is real. It's really making me remember like, yeah, sometimes there are clouds, sometimes they're a struggle. And I've always been that person to fight with other people. But it's nice to have that come back to me too. That the that it has been provided back in what you're doing and like, thank you, like, thank you for giving me this opportunity to really think about what I believe in and what I fight for, you know. So anyways, did we miss anything? Is there anything else you need right now about that?

Jeremy Yuan: That’s pretty much enough for this moment.

Tylir McKenzie: For this moment. Yeah, this is the official version.

[End: FILENAME.mov]