

Transcript	Index/Code
<p><b>Christina</b> [00:00:16] All right. Today's date is Sunday, November 27th. And this interview is being conducted in the University of Southern Maine Library in Portland, and my name is Christina Miner, spelled c h r i s t i n a M i n e r. And can you please say and spell your name?</p> <p><b>Mickey</b> [00:00:41] Yes, my name is Mickey McConnell. M i c k e y M c C o n n e l l.</p> <p><b>Christina</b> [00:00:51] And can you tell me how old you are?</p> <p><b>Mickey</b> [00:00:53] I am 31.</p> <p><b>Christina</b> [00:00:55] And what pronouns do you use?</p> <p><b>Mickey</b> [00:00:57] She her</p> <p><b>Christina</b> [00:01:00] And what words do you use to describe yourself in terms of sexual orientation?</p> <p><b>Mickey</b> [00:01:06] Yeah. Bisexual.</p>	<p>Date/Location</p> <p>Names</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Pronouns</p> <p>Sexual Orientation</p>

**Christina** [00:01:09] Now I'd like to ask you about your family of origin. Where were you born?

**Mickey** [00:01:17] I was born in Dundee, Scotland.

**Christina** [00:01:22] Where have you lived?

**Mickey** [00:01:25] See, my mom was in the military, so we moved around a lot. I'm told we when I think from Scotland to Wisconsin, there were a couple of other places I don't quite remember where, but eventually we ended up in Maine when I was about six or seven.

**Christina** [00:01:46] Did you grow up in a family with two parents?

**Mickey** [00:01:50] I was born into a family with two parents, but most of my growing up was done with just my mom.

**Christina** [00:01:59] And what did your parents do for work?

**Mickey** [00:02:02] Yeah. My mom, while she was in the Navy, um, was a Russian linguist. Very exciting. And then once she retired, she

Place of Birth

Parents

became a professional baker. My father. What did he do for work? To my knowledge, he didn't work. Um, that was sort of one of the problems. He went to school for a long, long, long time. And I don't think ever really landed on one thing. And that was part of the reason behind the divorce. So.

**Christina** [00:02:41] Do you have any siblings?

**Mickey** [00:02:42] I do. I have right now I have one sibling. Their name is Hilary. To my knowledge, they use she, her and they them pronouns. So I'll be referring to Hilary as she, I think just for simplicity's sake. Yes. So Hillary's a year and a half younger than I am. I had an older sister who was assigned male at birth. This sister came out to us as trans in her twenties and chose the name Emily. So I would be referring to my older sister as Emily and using she her pronouns. But Emily is no longer with us.

**Christina** [00:03:26] I'm sorry.

**Christina** [00:03:33] You had said your parents divorced. That's true. Can you tell me a little bit about that and the effect it had on you, if any?

**Mickey** [00:03:41] Sure. Wow. Yeah. It definitely had some effects. I think that for all children, when your parents are going through a divorce, there are a couple of things that

Sibling - Hilary

Parents Divorce

necessarily go through your mind, like, did I do something wrong? Is this my fault? You know, like, why doesn't mom or dad love me? Or, you know, that kind of stuff? Very dramatic. And I didn't really understand until later, like, just how bad things were in the home because I just I was too young to remember a lot of the things that happened. But my father was extraordinarily abusive, not just to his children, but also to his wife. There was an amount of like visible physical and emotional abuse happening in the home. So the tricky thing, though, was that my mom, being in the Navy would deploy for months at a time, so my siblings and I were left in the care of I hesitate to call him a sociopath. I don't think that's true. He definitely was a narcissist with some very strange ideas about how to discipline children. So him leaving like mom finally sort of getting up the gumption to serve him like divorce papers took a really long time and it probably would have been better if the divorce had happen sooner. But I think it just wasn't really clear to my mom exactly how bad things were until she was home for a longer span of time and started seeing like how he was interacting with us. And yeah, so I think as a kid it was really hard. You just deal with a lot of those hard feelings. But later on, as I talked to my mom and sort of asked her more questions about it, the more I came to realize like, wow, we're really lucky. We're really lucky that our mom divorced him when she did. Otherwise, he may have stuck around and we'd all be more messed up than we are now.

**Christina** [00:05:59] You were 6?

Family Dynamics

**Mickey** [00:06:00] Yeah, I was six and Emily was nine. Hilary was four or five, so pretty young. Yeah.

**Christina** [00:06:10] Would you describe your family as close?

**Mickey** [00:06:18] I hate to say it. Not really. The we had like a pretty chaotic home environment like and I really kind of hate to say this, but Emily again was assigned male at birth and went by a masculine name then. And unfortunately, she bore a striking resemblance to our father. She spoke the same way, shared a lot of some of his magical thinking, some of his narcissism. I don't think that she was a bad woman or anything. Of course not. We were children. And having that influence in the house, it almost seemed like she just wanted to stir up trouble all the time. And I know that that's not true, but it made it really difficult to cultivate a home environment that felt really safe and really like we could be vulnerable with each other and be more close because there was always a danger that it was that vulnerability was going to be exploited somehow. And our mom was working 50 hours a week and has barely enough energy to make sure that we eat at night. So she's struggling with that and we're trying to deal with Emily. And there was a brief period of time after Emily moved out where it was just Hilary, mom, me and we all dealt with a great amount of sort of like grief and guilt about the fact that for that time, things were wonderful at home. Like, we we did get a lot closer. We spent a lot more time together. We were able to talk a bit more freely. And I felt like we were able to like process some some of the stuff that we had been able to process

Home Life

earlier on. So now I would say, like, I talk to my mom pretty frequently. Um, unfortunately, Hilary and I aren't speaking right now. We had a disagreement last October, and we haven't. Yeah, it's a mess. So, generally speaking, we're pretty close now. It's not all doom and gloom.

**Christina** [00:08:37] Emily, right. Yes. Yep. Yep. Who is not here anymore?

**Mickey** [00:08:42] Yeah.

**Christina** [00:08:43] I'm sorry. Can you tell me what happened?

**Mickey** [00:08:45] Sure. So, Emily, she was so smart. Um, she moved to Connecticut after she. Well, she graduated high school. And the difficulty was that I say this knowing that I'm a reasonably smart person, like I tutor for a living. I'm in a master's program easily and like, with no intent to self deprecate. Emily was easily, twice or three times smarter than I am, like actual genius level IQ like. The problem with this though, was that she didn't feel like she needed to prove anything to anybody. So if you sat this person down in a classroom at 17 years old and said, write this paper, she would look at you and say, I don't feel like it. I'm not going to. So that makes it hard to get good grades in school. She did very well in science and math, but when she graduated, she didn't really have the grades to get into school, into college, which was pretty disappointing. So and no one was more surprised than me to hear that my mom had

Sibling - Emily

convinced her to enlist in the Navy. And like because she always our mom, it always said to us, like, you know, guys like if you ever need like a fallback plan, there's always the military. Like, you can do that. And we'd all sort of scoffed at that idea, like, heck no. And then here I was like, I'm in my first year of college, and Emily is going to boot camp. And I'm like, What are you what are you talking about? What's going on? So at this time, she was still identifying as male. While she was in the Navy, she got certified to be a nuclear engineer on a submarine. Being without daylight of any kind for months at a time can do a lot of weird things to a person. And I, if my understanding is correct at this time, was when she, like her gender dysphoria and body dysphoria, really, really started kicking in, I think not because of the stress she was under, but I think it was exacerbated by that. This I don't know for certain, but based on what my mom and I have talked about, it seems as though once Emily returned from her time, she went on like two or three different submarine voyages and then came back and was so like emotionally, psychologically, just not okay. They medically discharged her. My thinking is that she may have said like, I'm trans and I need gender reassignment. And I absolutely believe the military would say something like, Well, why don't you deal with that after you, after we don't have to deal with you anymore. So it was a really rough long road for her for a while, but she eventually ended up in Connecticut and going to school and she seemed to be liking what she was doing. She was very private. She had a very deep voice and really wanted and she was working with a voice coach. My impression was at this time, I'm in my early mid-twenties. My impression was she really just didn't want to like physically come home or like be with us until

she could sort of like get herself looking and feeling the way that she wanted to look and feel. And I completely respected that. And I understood that where she had such a naturally deep voice speaking in a higher register for her was quite difficult. So we didn't have a lot of phone conversations and indeed I hadn't spoken to her for six months. When I got the call, it was December 12th, 2017, and it was snowing. And my mom called me and said, Are you sitting down? And I was like, Oh, no. So she said, Emily died in a car accident. I just got the phone call. The police gave me a ride home from work. I was devastated, obviously. I we got off the phone. I went and threw up. And that was so, so tough. She was 29 and she was on her way to her first day at a new job. And I there's not a single day that goes by that I'm like, damn, that's not fair, man. Like, she was really excited about that job, too. Yeah, just. And there are a lot of things I wanted to talk to her about that I won't be able to now. Thank you. But it's it's been five years. I have really wonderful friends and my mom and I are really communicative about it. I spent a lot of time processing that grief, realizing that because we were such a small family and we have such a complex trauma history, it's really hard for us to get very, very close to people. So when we do get close to someone, it feels like a huge, big deal. And then when that person is gone, it like it actually felt like there was a hole in my chest, like some part of me had been taken out. But I think because we were so small, I hadn't really had to deal with grief before. Like my grandmother died when I was very, very young. But that was really it. So my first major experience with death was my sister, which is I know, I'm sorry that I laugh, but it's I think it's partly coping and partly like I, I do see sort of the light side and things. Emily also had just like a very dry, like

Sibling - Emily's death



cynical, dark, sarcastic sense of humor. So sometimes if I got to talking about our agony over here, like, yeah, okay, yeah, sure. Just keep going. But anyway. Yeah, so that's that's Emily. Okay.

**Christina** [00:14:53] I'm sorry. Now, I'd like to ask you about your experiences with friendship and chosen family. Yeah. Do you have a close circle of friends?

**Mickey** I do.

**Mickey** [00:15:08] We have, we call ourselves team fat man. It wasn't my choice. It's a name from a long time ago. I don't know where it comes from, but it's me, my partner, David. Let's see. Lucas. Jasper. Deshawn. Brian. David. So there's seven or so of us, and then Maya. Yeah. So seven or so we get together when the weather's nice and play cards, we play online together, we play video games together. So yeah, it's nice for good.

**Christina** [00:15:48] Coming out, when did you first start to think of yourself as something other than just heterosexual?

**Mickey** [00:15:55] Oh, wow. Hmm.

**Christina** [00:15:59] We went back about 15 years ago?

Friendship and Chosen Family

**Mickey** [00:16:02] Yeah. So I. I think I first started thinking about it. Um, I don't know. I realized that the kind of, like, I thought of it as jealousy for other girls. Like, I like I want to be them or I want to be like them. And then I realized it's not. No, no, I want them to like me. And then, you know, in a little playground kid way, like, no, I want them to like me. Like me, like sort of younger conceptualization of that. And it's like, well, that's weird, so we shouldn't talk about it. And then once I got around 14 years of age, I had a friend named Cecilia looking back, she engaged in some risky behaviors, but I mean, I did too. And it was adolescence. So she had a boyfriend who had access to marijuana. And these were the circumstances under which I first kissed Cecilia. So we were both high, and I sort of didn't like that. Like, I felt like I couldn't, like, properly, like, engage with this experience that's like 14 years old. I was like, I want to do this when we're not like when we're sober because I was afraid she wouldn't want to. And later on, we sobered up and she did. And I was like, Oh, my God, I think little girl likes me. This is incredible. Um, so it happened a few more times, and one time she accidentally supposedly she says it was an accident. Left a mark on my neck because dumb, dumb young teenagers. So I think it was my close to my birthday or something. I'm going out with my mom, we're doing errands and we're coming back to the car. And back then I had long hair and I accidentally sort of like pushed it to the wrong side. And she said, Kathryn. Q Mara, Ruth McConnell, what is that on your neck? I was like, It's a bug bite. She's like, That is not a bug bite. Don't you dare lie to me like I ran into something like Katie, I'm not stupid. Who is it? I'm like, No, no, I'm so embarrassed. I can't. And she's like, She tries to be my friend. It's like, it's okay. You can tell me, like, we're

## Reflection on Coming Out

Mom's denial of Mickey being bisexual

all girls here, but so, like, the social backdrop against which this is happening, right? My junior high school had just formed the first Gay-Straight Alliance at that school. The club was like for people big because everybody was so afraid of being called like, I apologize for the language. Like a fag, a dike, a queer. Like, like just by associating with the GSA, it's like, oh, you must be gay. Like, and that's somehow, like, just a nasty word. And I was all over already a very sensitive child, so I didn't like the idea of getting opening myself up to more teasing. But so anyway, my mom's talking to me. She's like, Oh, is it Ben? Like, is it a boy from school? She thinks it's a boy. I'm like.

**Mickey** [00:19:24] It's not a boy. She's like, I'm sorry, what did you say? I said, it wasn't a boy. And she looked. It was almost like she didn't know what to do with that for a second, like her brain just had to load. And she said, it's not so. So who who have you been kissing? And I sort of muttered, I'm like, Cecilia, that was when everything kind of just went to hell. She I hesitate to use the term blow up because I think it's I think so often it's hyperbolic, but I remember her getting extremely frustrated and raising her voice a bit and saying things like, you know, I don't want you hanging around with that girl. She is going to ruin your reputation. People are going to think things about you because you spend time with her. And I tried in my defense like, no, mom look like I'm attracted to boys and girls. Like, I'm interested in that. She's like, No, you're not. You're just saying that because it's an idea Cecilia put in your head and I'm like, again, like 14 or 15 or something like this. This is my mom, my like former military mom, my mom, who was like a drill sergeant for a little while telling me like, no,

High School Experience - Gay-Straight Alliance

Cecilia

you're not. You're wrong. And that really, really upset me. Like, generally speaking, when I was a kid, I didn't bother fighting with my mom. I usually just agreed. And I didn't want to make problems for her. But I was like, No, it's not just that. Like, I've been attracted to other girls too. And then came the argument, Well, you can't have both. You're either gay or straight, and that's it. And now, of course, we know the few things could be further from the truth. It really is a spectrum. But that caused like a huge rift between me and my mom for like, I mean, everything feels like a long time when you're a teenager, but that that really sucked. We're we're much more comfortable about it now. We've made up after that. But yeah, that's a little of how that experience would open. Oh, gosh. Probably like a month, month and a half before she started looking at me normally again and like.

**Christina** [00:21:54] How does all that feel?

**Mickey** [00:22:01] Really bad. Like you know, here I am. Like, this is scary for me to like, I don't know what's happening. And I'm routinely getting told by everyone around me like, you're wrong or you're disgusting. Like the, the other narrative that was going around at the time was that specifically about girls. So here we see some patriarchy also getting in here for girls growing up. In that time, what we were told is any girl who says she's bisexual is again, I apologize for the language is a slut. And that's that's it. That's the only explanation. You're such a that that you'll just with anybody to do with anybody you don't care. I'm like, well, that's not that's definitely not what I want to do. But like, is that my only options? I do. I have to be either like a sex crazed lunatic who will have sex with

Reflection of Mom's denial

anything, with a pulse, or like a straight laced, like, churchgoer. Like, what's what's the vibe? Um, yeah. So that was. That was that. I answer your question. Yes. Okay. Sorry.

**Christina** [00:23:22] What was the best response you received when you came out, and was that the worst response?

**Mickey** [00:23:28] Oh, that was definitely the worst response. I didn't tell anybody else. I told my mom and I saw how that went. And I just I thought to myself, I'm going to turn it off, but I'm just we're going to flip that switch and we're never going to think about it again. Like, maybe I'm just not attracted to anybody. Maybe I just don't care about people. Maybe I could just be a sexless, genderless robot who goes to school and, like, is not perceived by other humans. Yeah, I didn't tell anybody else. I told Cecilia what had happened. We continued kissing and spending time together.

**Christina** [00:24:15] But it happened at school. You said that there was a group that formed?

**Mickey** [00:24:20] Yeah. The Gay-Straight Alliance. So they had a teacher or two that was like sponsoring the club. And I think there were like four people initially, and only two of them were out. Out of not yeah, out as like gay or whatever I want to say the other two were like allies, like, oh, we're gay straight alliance. And for a while I was sort of like, well, I guess I can be an ally, but I was so afraid of, like, getting associated with the club

Worst Response

Support of high school teachers, role models

and then having someone say something to me or saying something to my mom or like telling my friends they couldn't spend time with me anymore or something like that. So like I mentioned, I think like I confided in like maybe one or two friends once I got into high school.

**Christina** [00:25:17] It took that amount of time?

**Mickey** [00:25:18] Yeah. Yeah. I mean, that experience with my mom was really rough. Yeah. You know, it's like Mom's here. Mom loves you. I'll always be here for you no matter what. Unless you're right. That's sort of how it felt.

**Christina** [00:25:34] Based on condition?

**Mickey** [00:25:34] On conditions. Yeah, exactly. It's conditional. Like I, you know, I hate this sounds horrible, but, like, I only love and support you as long as you're the kind of child I want you to be. Of course, I don't feel that way now. But yeah, at the time that was that was pretty tough.

**Christina** [00:25:50] And then you started getting a little braver in high school?

**Mickey** [00:25:54] A little bit, yeah.

Conditional love from Mom

**Christina** [00:25:55] How did that go?

**Mickey** [00:25:57] Well, I started hanging out with the theater crowd a lot. The theater kids. I was so just, like, mesmerized by how confident they seemed and how funny. And, like, together they were like, I really, really wanted to be in that group, and I didn't know if I had a way in. And I did find a way. And I had like a friend from class who helped me get a job, like, working backstage. And then it was like diving into a whole new pond. Like, you know, I think the running joke was like, everyone in the theater department is gay. Like, we're all gay, don't you know? Yeah. Oh, we got together last weekend. They got like there was some drama, of course, with the theater group. But, you know, boys who like boys and girls who like girls and who like we're not shouting it from the rooftops. But they were like at least they were like expressing that somehow they were like putting those desires or sort of interests like into action, usually just in the form of like kissing or, you know, whatever. So yeah, I think it was as I spent more time with those guys, I got a little bit more confident. I saw more and more people sort of doing this lifestyle. I started re-asking myself those questions like, Okay, does this actually mean that I'm like a terrible, horrible slut? Or like, maybe do I just need to have that switch turned off still? And I think really like the switch, but got stuck to the on position when I met this girl named Julie. Oh, my God. I love that girl so much. Like, she was just she played the saxophone and she was, like, on the track team when she was just little petite Greek looking girl. And I don't know why, but, like, I was so shy and so bookish and just

Theater Group and Friendship

Acceptance of Theater Group

always, like, just trying to answer things in class and, like, not spending time with anybody because I was so shy and Julie made a point of like, coming over and talking to me for like kind of the first time in my high school career. She was like, Hi, like, I think you're cool. Want to hang out? It's like, okay. So I think she was probably the first girl I ever like, sort of fell in love with a little bit. I still carry a candle for her. She's the one who got away anyway. Sorry, I don't mean to derail that. Now.

**Christina** [00:28:39] After that, how did you start feeling more comfortable with it and not so traumatized?

**Mickey** [00:28:48] Yeah. Yeah. The trauma was definitely still there. And I. It was nice to have a sense of, like, community with some of the theater kids. Like there were some of them who, you know, like, hey, my dad just kicked me out because he found out I'm gay. And it's like, well, we've always known you're gay. Like, but dad didn't. And, you know, Dad's on the school board or, you know, cause I grew up in Brunswick. So a lot of, you know, high powered, you know, doctors, lawyers, it's a very affluent town. And with affluence, I think, comes a certain amount of like social, like oppression, of deviance. Like we don't want to be seen as deviant or strange or weird or anything. It could affect reelection next year. So I think things really started getting a little bit clearer for me. Like I felt more comfortable when I realized one of my best, best friends. Lauren By the time I was a junior in high school, I had a group of three or four girlfriends and we were all pretty close. And Lauren was very open about the

Community with Theater Group



fact that her brother Jonathan was completely out like out proud, like God, just perfect in every way. This boy, like the girls dream. He would pick up Lauren like from tennis practice. And every single girl is like, Lord, your brother's so hot. She's like, he's gay. Like no really? So I think having that or being like, no, he's wicked gay, it's sort of like, Oh, okay, well, maybe it's okay for me to be bisexual. It's okay for me to at least, like, have these feelings. Maybe I won't act on them, but, like, it's okay for me to feel these things. Oh.

**Christina** [00:30:53] Did you get any support in high school from the teachers? And were there any groups?

**Mickey** [00:30:58] Mm hmm. To my knowledge

**Mickey** [00:31:06] There wasn't. I like I would hate to misremember and sell Brunswick short if they did have a Gay-Straight Alliance in my high school. But I don't remember that they did. So like I confided in one teacher I got really close with and he was like, Great. How do you feel about that? I'm like, okay. I guess he's like, Is it a problem? Like, I don't know. Is it? No. Love whoever you want. I don't care. I'm here to teach you physics.

**Christina** [00:31:41] And based on your experiences with middle school and high school, what do you think schools could do?

No Support for the LGBTQ community in High School

**Mickey** [00:31:49] Oh, my goodness. Well, I think that there needs to be some kind of, like if not comprehensive, then at the very least well thought out and thoroughly researched. Like psychoeducation around gender and sexuality. I really, really think that an entire fully half of the health class requirement should be focused on this stuff because there's still so much misinformation out here. I meet kids every single day, queer kids who are like I. The other week I had a student. I've never met this boy in my life, but I saw he was so, so strung out and anxious and he blurted out like, I came out as gay yesterday and I'm like, okay, sweetie, like, this is a very different conversation now. How are you feeling? He's like, I don't know. I'm really upset about it. Like, because he'd never had that kind of support. So having something in a school that saying like, hey, like homosexuality and like gender deviants are not well received in mainstream society still. But this is a place where you can be safe. I think that is what's most important, not just keeping kids physically safe, but bullying is a huge, huge issue, especially among members of the LGBTQ community. Like, I'm fortunate in a lot of ways that I'm cisgendered, so I identify as a woman and I appear in a way that I present as a woman, or people look at me and say, Oh, that's a lady. So in some ways, like, it's easier for me than it would have been for, say, Emily, who isn't traditionally feminine. She's very tall, very broad shoulders, very big feet, like deeper voice. So in a lot of ways, it was easier for me to blend in. And being bisexual is also like it's handy because I am still interested in boys and there's plenty of those around and I am pretty sure I won't get pooh poohed for just having an idea of having a relationship with one of them. But anyway, I

Ideas for what Middle Schools and High Schools can do for the LGBTQ community

think I went off on a tangent there. I apologize.

**Christina** [00:34:28] Where did you go to college for undergraduate?

**Mickey** [00:34:33] Yeah. So I first I went to Colby College up in Waterville, and I was there for a year and a half and I hated it. I love the classes, the campus. I loved everything except the other students. I really just could not make what I felt were deep, meaningful connections with the folks I was in school with. And I found that very, very difficult to take. I always had thought that I'm a pretty isolated person at this time. Right. This is back in 2009, 2010. I was pretty quiet, like trying not to rock the boat. Maybe I don't need a lot of friends, but being somewhere away from home, like, totally isolated. I didn't have a car and, like, I didn't feel really well supported. I was just so miserable there by the third semester that like the depression had kicked in and the depression was getting very, very bad. I understood that if I wanted to continue being a healthy, safe, happy human, I needed to leave the situation. So I transferred to USM and I finished my undergrad here. My bachelor's degree is in economics and I'm currently in the second year of my four year track in the social work program.

**Christina** [00:36:05] What made you go into social work?

Colby College

**Mickey** [00:36:08] Oh, well, it's kind of the it's kind of backwards. It's almost like social work got me into economics. So I'll explain what I mean by that. So in 2000, 2009, that big financial crash happened. So this was right around the time that I got my driver's license and I remember hearing on the radio, like in the years leading up to it, you know, like bad credit, no credit, no problem. We'll finance anybody. You can have a mortgage and you can have a mortgage. And like, I didn't understand all that stuff. And then, you know, months or years later, the economy crashes and it's like, oh, well, all these how the housing market and like all these loans that people can't pay. And I'm like, wait, so on the one hand, we'll give you a loan no matter what. On the other hand, it's completely your fault that you can't pay it back. But we knew you weren't going to be able to pay, so why would you loan someone that money in the first place? And I remember distinctly I was sitting Pleasant Street in Brunswick. I was stuck in traffic. And I'm listening to this B.S. on the radio. And I'm getting so, so aggravated because I have two siblings and a mom who works 50 or 60 hours a week just to make sure that we have food on the table and clothes to eat and like a paper to write on, that doesn't seem fair. And then we bail out the banks. How does that work? And any time I asked those questions I got, I came up against this like gate of, well, it's economics and you don't know economics. So it's complicated. And I said to myself, You know what? Fine. I'm going to go learn economics. I'm going to get a degree in economics. That way when someone tries to tell me there's no money for something, I can look at them and say, Actually, you know what there is and I'm going to show you why. So that was my

Economics Degree

intention all along, was to use the economics for social work. But yeah.

Social Work Field

**Christina** [00:38:05] Okay. Can we back up to Colby.

**Mickey** [00:38:09] Yeah.

**Christina** [00:38:09] When you were there, did they include material on LGBTQ history, culture, anything?

Colby College and LGBTQ support

**Mickey** [00:38:19] Not that I was aware of. I did take a cultural anthropology class and we discussed gender quite a bit, sort of like in between genders and how gender is sort of expressed in different countries. But I would say there weren't even really that many like pride flags around campus. It was still pretty like, I think for a while since was like, Yeah, okay, it's fine if you're gay, it's fine if you're gay. I'm not though. It's fine for you. I'm just I'm not I'm not gay. But if you want to be gay, that's that's fine. Was sort of the the cultural like back and forth. So, yes, it's okay. But also know that like things are going to be said about you behind your back. Kind of. I know. It's unfortunate.

**Christina** [00:39:06] Were you out by that time?

**Mickey** [00:39:08] I was not. No, I well. No. I kiss girls at parties, but I don't think that was a that wasn't a real. It wasn't something that I was doing because I was anything other than, like, drunk.

**Christina** [00:39:25] Just. And then when you came here. Mm hmm. Was. Were you out here and was there general information available?

**Mickey** [00:39:32] Hmm. Oh, I think at this point in my life, still, I had kind of thought about it as, like, not switching off that part of me, but, like, pulling a curtain over it. Like, maybe I can, you know, I would write stories. I've been writing stories for like since I was a kid. And if I want to read a story about like a particular person, I can try and write that story. So like I write a lot of stories that feature queer ladies, you know, who maybe have, like, invisible disabilities. But, uh, no, I wasn't really, I wasn't really out yet. Again, I think maybe once or twice. If I was at a party and got drunk enough, someone would say something. I'd be like, Hey, me to be like, What? Really?

**Christina** [00:40:25] So still quiet here.

**Mickey** [00:40:26] Mm mm. Okay. Yeah. Yeah.

Still Quiet about Coming Out

**Christina** [00:40:33] Can we move on to graduate work?

**Mickey** [00:40:35] Yeah. Great.

**Christina** [00:40:35] I see you're in the master's program. I am. Here? Yes. Tell me a little bit about that. Yes.

**Mickey** [00:40:42] I love my program. So USM has the School of Social Work is accredited by the National Association of Social Workers. So when you graduate from this master's program, you sit for a licensing exam and USM has a 99% pass rate for. So I'm not worried about it. I think I usually test pretty well, but I like that it's a generalist program. So some social work programs I've come to learn have a more clinical leaning to them. So as a social worker, you kind of ride this strange line between, you know, like social welfare stuff and medicine and psychology. So on the one hand, we work with clients and we have to be able to make judgments about them to the tune of like, okay, I, I met with Christina. She presented as affable. She nodded her head. She was clear. She made sure that I understood. She knew what I was saying. You know, this is how she spoke. This is how she was sitting. I lost my train of thought. What were we talking about? Those are the programs. And the programs. Yes. So clinical versus not clinical. So clinical would be more like, you know, I think that you have depression and you should see a doctor about taking some meds versus like you're having a really hard time. Let me try to help connect you with resources. So we sort of do

Masters Program USM

Social Work Program

both. But there's been kind of a push back in recent years against the more clinical model, because if all you're planning on doing is clinical work, then there's no room for advocacy, for like policy level, social work for yeah, just a lot of stuff. So a generalist program sort of prepares you for, I mean, generally like any social work role, the idea is to give us all like a solid foundation of theory and practice so that we can go on further to specialize once we're done with the MSW program if we want to, I plan on sitting for the master's exam. Then you have to do two or three years of supervised work and then you can sit for the licensed clinical social worker exam, which I plan to do. And then you can be a licensed clinical social worker, and maybe then I can do the job I want.

**Christina** [00:43:27] What is that?

**Mickey** [00:43:28] I would love to work in a school as like a counselor, therapist type person. Those positions are so strange right now. There's so much in flux in schools like the role of life guidance counselor or career counselor, or like whoever it might be. But I think that kids need that.

**Christina** [00:43:50] And what do you want to bring to that?

**Mickey** [00:43:52] I want to bring queerness and video games to that. So I was a little flippant, but yeah, I just think back to like when we were in middle school, things are really, really tough, partly because like we

Work after graduate school

Ideas for Social Work after graduation



weren't properly socialized as children. This is another nice thing about going through the social work program is it actually is helping me process some of my old trauma because now I have words for these things and I have new ways of sort of understanding them or making sense of them, like, you know, rather than thinking, I remember in sixth grade vividly, I got made fun of for wearing the same clothes, like virtually every day. They weren't all the same clothes. I was always clean, but I wore like jeans and a hoodie. And all girls, of course, can be especially cruel. That really stunk, and I just didn't know how to respond to that. And I responded to any, any negative emotional or social stimuli by crying like I was a huge crier as a kid. And I remember, like in this really tumultuous, really difficult time, there was a school social worker. Her name was Starla and I love her. She she sat with my family for I have no many, I have no idea how many days or afternoons. But she helped us so, so much. And I sort of want to want to pay that forward, give it back, help out some kids, you know. Make myself feel good.

**Christina** [00:45:39] Adult learning coach?  
When did that happen?

**Mickey** [00:45:44] Oh. So Adult Learning Coach. After I'd been at USM for a year or so, there was a gap between the start and the end of my bachelor's degree, but when I came back for the second half of my BA, I needed a job and I submitted a paper to one of my professors and on the back of it she wrote See Me, and I didn't have a grade on it. And I was like, Oh no. She's like, Oh, did I plagiarize something by accident? So I go to see her and she says, Hey, I know this guy

Adult Learning Coach

named Paul. He works in the Learning Commons and he's really in need of folks to be writing assistance. Do you want a job? And I said, Oh, yeah, I guess did I do okay on my paper? She's like, It's probably the best paper I've read in five years. I'm like, from a student. She's like, Yeah, from student. Okay. And she put like a little A-plus on it. And I joked, I was like, I didn't think, you know, professors gave eight pluses. And she looked at me. She's like, We do not we don't do that, so go get that job. I'm like, okay, great. So I did that job for a semester. I loved it. Christina was happy with me. My old boss, Norma was really happy with me. They recommended me for the pure academic coaching position after hearing sort of some of what I was already doing with my students, because I realized as I'm helping people sort of like write their papers and stuff, we never come to school like just as a student, we're, we're our entire selves all the time. We carry those things around with us. So if you come to me for help with a paper and you're having a really, really hard time getting started, maybe the issue is not actually the paper. Maybe it's there are five siblings at home and no one to care for them. And you're stuck watching your playing babysitter like that, you know, be very difficult. So assessing sort of like what student's needs are, meeting them where they're at and figuring out what they need. So then I moved into pure academic coaching and I started noticing that the folks I was getting for academic coaching, a lot of them were, are adult learners. So like 30, 40, 50, 60 plus, you know, lots of work life experience, like just a huge variety of things that you all have done. It's incredible. And I was so like floored and kind of humbled by that, that I went to Christina. I was like, This is amazing. Like, we have so many cool adult learners, but I'm noticing, like, their needs are very different

Adult Learners

than our 17, 18 year old students, right? So on the one hand, you know, 17 year olds here, maybe because his parents want him to be here, maybe he doesn't know what he wants to do. So, you know, which is fine. That's totally a normal phase of life. If you're Christina Miner or Mickey McConnell or someone and you're coming back to school after all this time, you have a purpose. You have like a goal in mind. You have something that you're working towards, and it's more an issue like adult learners, I find generally don't need a lot of motivation. Younger students really need some help finding motivation sometimes. But so Christina, myself and another of the English faculty spent a summer creating the adult learner coach job position. And once we'd done that, we hired on two adult learner coaches. One was me, and the other was it was René, the professor we worked with the first semester. So yeah, that's how the adult learner coach thing came to be.

**Christina** [00:49:44] Is there anything I haven't asked you that you want to talk about?

**Mickey** [00:49:50] Hmm. Was there something I was hoping to talk about?

**Mickey** [00:49:56] Oh, I think coming out to my mom more recently was in, like, coming out more officially like, to everybody was very exciting and very scary. And I, I feel kind of silly, like, because it happened last year, a year ago, I was so nervous about it and I knew I didn't need to be because I have people who love me and society I think is

Adult Coach Learner Position

Coming Out to Mom Again

more accepting now. But I made some comment to my mom. I don't remember exactly what was said, but sometime in the past couple of years I was like, Yeah, I like being bi-sexual just like, Oh, okay. Yeah. And we just continued the conversation. Like, now she's more comfortable talking about it directly, I think partly because Hilary and Emily, like, confused her a little bit more. I don't mean that as like a slight to my mom or anything, but like hard working mom raises three children and all of them in some capacity or gender or sexuality, just sort of this fruit salad. So Hillary's asexual and a-romantic. I'm bisexual and I guess romantic. Emily was trans and a-romantic. And I sort of say, Wow, I think I'm so sorry for what happened. You were probably just hoping for one normal kid or just like, you know what? As long as you're all healthy and happy, I don't care. I don't care. I don't have to understand it. I don't have to get any of it. Like she called me when Emily came out to her and was like, Katie, can I ask you some questions? And I'm like, Yeah, of course. So Emily wants to come out to you herself, but I just have so many questions. So she she's trans like, oh, because at that point, I was like, Who's Emily? I hadn't gotten the information yet. She's like, So what does that all mean? So I explained what it meant to be trans like to the best of my ability. And she was like, I don't get it. And I said, Mom, I don't think you need to get it. I think everything you've just said is like, I want you to be happy and healthy, like, and to do things that you like and to be safe, you know, like if those things are met, she's like, Yeah, exactly. That's really all that matters to me. I'm like, Great. So then nothing really changes. Just you have a daughter now. Congratulations, Molotov. That humorous anecdote, anecdote about my boyfriend coming out to me. So David and I

Mom more accepting and able to talk about it

have been together for seven years this past June, and I think we were four years into our relationship and being with him, I've gotten so much more confident. I'm more confident being out. I don't worry about what people think about that nearly as much as me. Right. And I noticed for he could have a hard time talking about like his feelings and he gets a little quiet. And I sort of noticed he was acting a little strangely. And then we went to bed that evening and he was still kind of tense, like, Honey, I can tell something's bothering you. Like, why don't why don't you just tell me what it is? He's like, Oh, I don't know. I'm trying to figure it out. I'm like, Why don't you just talk and I'll listen. And he didn't talk. He stayed silent, just sat there. And thank thought and he's like, I'm worried that you will, like, think differently about me or I'm worried that you won't want to be with me anymore. And I said to him, because I was thinking to myself, I'm like, Oh my God, is he gay? Like, Wait a minute, has he just been suffering through heterosexual sex for this long? Like, for why? Why would he do this? I'm like, Are you gay? Because we can work that out. Like, I love you so, so much. Like, we don't have to have sex if that's not what you're. He's like, No, no, no, I don't know. I'm not gay. And I'm like, Oh, okay, well, what's the deal? He's like, I think I'm, I think I'm bi. I'm like, Oh, that's great. Congratulations! So I don't know. He was so sheepish about it and so embarrassed. And honey, why would you think I'd think differently of you? It's like, I don't know. It's like this kind of manly, macho thing. Like, I know I'm a gay man. There's sort of this friction between the American sort of socialized ideal of a man very self-sufficient and manly and likes manly things, but like somehow having a different gender or sexual identity completely negates all of that, which I think doesn't have to be true, of course. But yeah, I think that was

Partner David

Partner David Coming Out Bi

really just that funny. I just like that about Dave. So, yeah, I think that's everything. Do you have any more questions for me?

**Christina** [00:55:03] No, I think that's it.

**Mickey** [00:55:04] Magnificent.

**Christina** [00:55:05] Thank you very much for being here.

**Mickey** [00:55:07] Thank you. Fantastic.