

Nicholas O. Rule '04  
Dartmouth College Oral History Program  
SpeakOut  
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

FISHBEIN: So my name is [Daniel A.] “Dan” Fishbein, and I’m here in Rauner [Special Collections] Library in Hanover, New Hampshire, on May 14<sup>th</sup>, at right about 11:30 a.m., and I’m speaking with Nicholas [O.] Rule, Dr. Nicholas Rule, who’s in Toronto, Canada, I believe. Is that correct?

RULE: That is correct.

FISHBEIN: Yeah, so nice to be with you here today, Nick. I’m really looking forward to our conversation. So, yeah, I think that normally when we start these interviews, we want to, you know, just begin, you know, at—at your beginning, if you could talk maybe a little bit about, you know, where you grew up, what your childhood was like, and then we’ll go from there.

RULE: Yeah. So I grew up in rural Florida, about two counties north of Tampa. I’m the youngest of four children in my family, and I’m the first one to—to go to college, so going to Dartmouth was a very big departure for me. My family was not particularly keen on the idea of higher education. They sort of saw it as kind of an elitist thing that was for rich people.

And so when I showed up at Dartmouth on September 12<sup>th</sup> 2000, I—I kind of came thinking that I probably wasn’t going to last. You know, that was sort of the message I had gotten from people back home, that, you know, even if I—even if I was able to pass the classes, which probably wasn’t going to happen, that I would never fit in. And so I came with—you know, with four suitcases. That was all that I had and, yeah, just sort of settled in and tried to—to do my best. So I think that sort of—that brings me right up there.

I guess, you know, in terms of other relevant things from my background, my family was sort of fundamentalist Christian, and [voice stops]

FISHBEIN: Hello? I'm sorry. I'm going to have to pause you there. It looks like the audio cut out again. My—my apologies. Sorry about that.

RULE: That's fine

FISHBEIN: So I have to do our little introduction one more time. Then we can get back into talking about your upbringing. So I'm Dan Fishbein. Today is May 14<sup>th</sup>. It's now 11:50 a.m. I'm in Rauner [Special Collections] Library in Hanover, New Hampshire, and I'm talking to Nicholas [O.] Rule, who's in Toronto, Canada.

Nick, you were telling me about the kind of transition that you were making from living in rural Florida, north of the Tampa area, to Dartmouth. You said that your family, you know, didn't really think that you would fit in. And you were explaining to me, you know, kind of the religious group that you grew up in and the kind of impact that that had on your life.

RULE: Yeah. So, yeah, so my family was—was pretty fundamentalist. Had some kind of fringe ideas about sort of what that meant. You know, my father believed in demon possession and things of that nature. Even the church I went to, you know, was in a strip mall, and it was sort of considered a heretic church compared to a lot of other—other branches around.

And so—so, yeah, it was sort of an odd context, I think, in that respect, especially being, you know, gay and not actually even realizing it. I mean, that's part of a lot of the reason that I didn't realize it. My family was—was very poor. Technically, we would have been categorized by sort of federal standards as living in extreme poverty. And the public school system was particularly bad in terms of its rankings within the state as well as the state within the country, and so Dartmouth was a really big—a really big shift for me.

You know, I guess perhaps inherent in the fact that I went to Dartmouth, I obviously, you know, never really fit in with the people back home. I was different in a lot of ways. And, you know, I eventually realized that, you know, one of the key

ways there was, you know, my sexuality. And so it was about the end of my—my freshman year at Dartmouth that I started sort of entertaining the idea that I might not be straight.

FISHBEIN: Mm-hm. How did your parents react to that news?

RULE: Not very well. [Chuckles.] So, you know, I—I told them right away, and I figured I would just—you know, as soon as I started suspecting—they were always trying to fix me up with people and—you know, with girls. And, you know, I—I basically—I didn't really have a lot to lose with my—with my family because they hadn't provided—they weren't probably providing any support. I mean, certainly not financially and really not very much sort of emotionally or psychologically, either.

And so the risk was pretty low in telling them. At the same time, it was a difficult thing. Particularly around that time at Dartmouth, it wasn't the most welcoming place for sexual minorities, and so there was a lot of feeling of isolation. Certainly, coming out to my family was going to, you know, somewhat increase that sense of isolation, only because it meant that the circle of people that I had around me was going to be smaller.

And so, you know, when I—when I first told them, they kind of just ignored it, and then it sort of cascaded, and many years of arguments and debates about whether it was right or wrong and whether it was just, you know, demon possession and things of that nature. And so those are arguments that, you know, one really can't win with rationality. [Chuckles.] And so it made it kind of difficult to—to really get anywhere with that. It was a pretty frustrating experience, and nevertheless I sort of persisted.

At the time, I guess things were fairly—fairly bad. My sister and her husband decided that they shouldn't let their children be around me because I was gay. And yet at the same time, they—whenever I would sort of be back home visiting, they would like to sort of bring up my sexual orientation when their friends were over, sort of in a way that almost kind of, I guess—like, I don't know whether it was to evoke sympathy from their friends or just sort of, you know,

make fun of me. And sort of I was kind of this, like, you know, odd thing to them. And so honestly, that was—you know, that was pretty hurtful.

Eventually, my—my brothers came around a little bit more with it. And so—but, yeah, I was pretty much—I think when I—even though I never really fit in and I didn't really have a good relationship with my—members of my family to begin with, that was really kind of the end of it for me with them. You know, we still keep in touch. Like, I call them on their birthdays, at least my brothers. But my parents are both dead. But it was never—things will never be the same, you know. Not that they were great before, frankly, but—but I think, you know, I'm certainly very self-conscious about it when I'm around them. And even, you know, when I'm back home, there's—I know they're—they're very ashamed of that.

Maybe their attitudes are little bit different now because society has shifted so much, but, you know, there—there weren't really gay people where I came from, and, you know, I think that—you know, as sort of my sister's reaction demonstrated, you know, I think sexual minorities in their minds are still lumped in with, you know, all kinds of, you know, phillios and other sort of sexual abnormalities that they see as, you know, immoral.

So—so that was, you know—that was pretty—pretty tough.

FISHBEIN: Yeah, it sounds like the—what was the name of the church you grew up going to?

RULE: It was—I mean, they technically called themselves the Church of Christ, but the rest of the Church of Christ considered our—our actual church to be heretical because some of the views were so extreme, and so they saw them—they had sort of dissociated from them, and so, yeah, it was—it was an interesting thing. My brother's father-in-law was our preacher, and, you know, it was really—you know, we weren't allowed to have—you know, there were no—we would sing in church, but there were no musical instruments allowed. And that was true at my brother's wedding. You know, there was no dancing allowed, and things of that

nature, so it was pretty weird in that respect, pretty outside the mainstream.

Meanwhile, my dad wouldn't really commit to a particular denomination, and he sort of hewed more toward the Pentacostals among anyone, but he was—he sort of just had a mish-mash of sort of, I think, more extreme views about things. You know, he really believed that women shouldn't—women should cover themselves from head to toe, he thought so they didn't tempt men. My sister doesn't work. You know, my brother's wife doesn't work. One of—my other brother—his wife does work, but they very much believe that a woman's place is in the home, even still, and raising children, even if their children are all off at school now. [Chuckles.] And so—but nevertheless they, you know,—they—that's sort of the mind-set. It's very sort of traditional.

FISHBEIN: What was your personal relationship with that, like, religious ideology when you were growing up? I mean, it sounds like you really didn't fit into some of the puritanical viewpoints that they had. But was it, like, more—

RULE: Yeah.

FISHBEIN: —[cross-talk] nuanced than just, like, you rejecting all of it?

RULE: Yeah, no, I was—I mean, I was—I was a good—I was a good member of the church, and I did—I did my part, you know. I always did what I was supposed to. I prayed all the time, and so I was—I was pretty devout. I mean, I really—I didn't believe a lot of the stuff they said. Like, but I was—I sort of—I was a good soldier, you know?

And that was part of—one of the things when I came to Dartmouth, I was, like,—I came in with this sort of fundamentalist notion that, you know, I should be, like, bringing Christianity to, you know, my—the people on my floor and, you know, that it was an important part of life, you know, having a relationship with God and everything.

And it was really interesting. You know, when I first got to Hanover, I couldn't actually find a church that—with anything like what I had growing up, and so I was kind of shopping around different places, trying different things. I went to the

Christian Science Reading Room. I went to the Lutheran church, I remember. I, you know, was involved with Campus Crusade for Christ [now Cru Dartmouth]. I don't know whether The Navigators are still on campus, but they were actually a little too—a little too fun for me.

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.]

RULE: So it was really the Campus Crusade people were sort of there. And I went to the Mormon temple once with a friend, and eventually I—I settled in with the Quakers, which was a really great thing, and I think actually really pivotal in me coming to realize that I was gay, because they had no problems with that.

And, of course, I went to the Quaker—you know, the Society of Friends [the Hanover Friends meeting] right across from the [Hanover] Co-op [Food Stores] on Lebanon Street there. And I went to them thinking, *Well, Quakers—they have to—you know, like the guy in the oatmeal box, will be really puritanical. You know, it'll be probably very familiar.* And I went. It seemed like the message that they were sort of offering was more like sort of true to what I was told in church without all of the other sort of, you know, stuff around it. And they were very compassionate and understanding and very progressive.

And I think with them giving me permission to say, “Hey, you can—you can be a Christian and you can be gay and that’s not a problem,” that was probably a really big sort of obstacle-clearing thing for me, even considering that I wasn’t straight. So that was—that was really helpful.

And so, yeah, I actually was one of the founding members of the Quaker student group on campus, which probably doesn’t exist anymore, because there weren’t a lot of us. But that was something that was a really helpful transition for me to—to get out of where I had been.

FISHBEIN: Hmm. Yeah, no, I’ve heard about them and kind of having a message of, like, tolerance and acceptance. It sounds like it would have been powerful for you.

RULE:

Yes. And it was interesting. You know, when I got—when I came on campus, you know, it was, like,—Dartmouth was this party school, right? And there was—there was definitely no alcohol in—in my church. And my mom had been an alcoholic anyway, and so, like, I had a weird relationship with alcohol. And that was something that was really challenging for me in particular, coming to Dartmouth, because of its reputation and, frankly, the reality of what I saw.

And so a lot of my friends ended up being, you know, the Campus Crusade people, people from The Navigators and all of these Christians: the Mormon people and so on. And when I—when I realized—started to realize I was gay, I—I realized I was losing all those friends, too. Like, they were definitely—you know, my roommate, who—I actually changed rooms after my—my first term, and my—my new roommate, who I met through these sort of, you know, Christian organizations on campus—you know, he was definitely—you know, had very clear views about homosexuality, as did a lot of our friends.

And so it was like—you know, when I came out, it—it really was like starting over, in a lot of ways. And it was—it was a pretty tough, you know, environment, as I said, because a lot of—and I'm sure you've heard this in the other interviews—you know, life as a gay person on campus back then was really—it was all sort of “keep it to yourself. It's in the closet.”

If you were one of the out people, you were really, like,—you only—you were only out if you had to be, was basically the idea. And those people were really sort of, I think, kind of ostracized by the sort of quiet gay community that was, you know, largely happening in frats and sororities, you know, behind the scenes.

There was a lot of gay sex going on, but there wasn't very much in terms of, you know, a gay identity. And the idea of sort of embracing that was a really foreign one, and even among people who were more willing to be out there about their sexuality, they didn't want to necessarily be involved with the gay organizations on campus. They sort of wanted to be seen as normal. You know, it was sort of—they wanted to be seen as—that, you know, being gay is just sort of an incidental part of their identity, and so it was—that was kind

of, like, the best you were going to get. And if you were too—too gay to conform to that, then there really wasn't a happy place for you at the time.

FISHBEIN: Hmm. And you don't think this kind of ostracizing of people who were maybe more, like, openly or flamboyantly gay—you don't think that was just true to the Christian community you were in at Dartmouth at that time?

RULE: Definitely not. No, definitely not. No, the Christians were just like, "Oh, if you're gay, okay. Well, you know, that's fine. You're going to hell." And that was it, you know? [Chuckles.] It was, like: Period. Whereas with—with the rest of the gay community, it was, like,—you know, the ostracism was really about, you know—about how you presented, I think.

FISHBEIN: Mm-hm. And were there—

RULE: So definite- —go ahead, please.

FISHBEIN: Were there any, like, particular events or anything where this feeling of ostracism, you know, really stood out to you, where you really kind of saw this sort of behavior taking place?

RULE: That's—yeah. I—I would say—I mean, definitely I didn't feel welcome in any of the Greek houses, you know. Even when I would go, you know, they would have, you know, the disco night at The Tabard, which was, like, the gayest thing you were going to get on campus, it was—it was a very sort of self-conscious kind of thing.

And, you know, I was sort of—I was more willing to be open about talking about my sexuality, and it definitely put me in a position where people, you know, would try to set me up with friends and things, and they'd be—and they just considered me—too many people knew I was gay to want to be seen with me, basically is what—what happened. And so—so even though I wasn't—I certainly wasn't the most flamboyant person on campus, you know, I was sort of—I was considered, you know, tainted in that sense. But, hey, you know.



FISHBEIN: So you—you were saying that you came out your freshman year in college?

RULE: Yeah. Yeah. So I think—so what's really interesting—so freshman fall, I arrived, and like I said, I didn't think I was going to last, so I was kind of like, *You know what? I'm gonna make them—the best of this. I'm gonna take advantage of sort of the unique Dartmouth opportunities that I can.* So I was, like, *I'm gonna do the things that, like, I can't do anywhere else. So, like, I'm gonna be a linguistics major because that doesn't happen everywhere. I'm gonna take Arabic.* It was pre-9/11. I was, like, you know, I needed a very different language, a non-European language, so *I'm gonna take Arabic.* I'd never heard of it, you know. It was, like, *This is super out there for me.*

And I also joined the crew team. And it turns out I—I don't have the right body for crew. I'm too short. [Both chuckle.] But I met some people, you know, at the boat house, on the team for the time that I lasted, which was very brief. And—and I think that was really what started things for me. Like, I—there were these—you know, there's one guy in particular that I—I saw, and I remember the first time I saw him, you know, the feeling I had was, like, *Wow! I wish—I wish I was that good-looking.*

And that was sort of the way that I thought about it, the way I understood my feelings, which was obviously a sense of attraction to him. And, you know, I would see him around campus and everything and kind of, you know, just always noticed him, and it just got to where I—I couldn't stop thinking about him. And eventually I was, like, *Something's really weird about this. You know, like, I just can't get this guy out of my head.*

So I started going to—I was—I was very, very—I was very depressed my freshman fall. And in part it was just because of all the trauma from growing up and things like that. And so, you know, it was the first time I had access to health care, because we didn't have insurance growing up, which was another thing. I was, like, *I'm gonna take advantage of this.*

So, like, I went and saw the nutritionist on campus. It turned out I was, like, pretty seriously malnourished because we didn't have a lot of food growing up. And so I was, like, trying to get myself in order. I started going to—to Dick's House [Dick Hall's House] and seeing a therapist for the depression. And I remember the guy that I saw, I told him that, you know, I was having—I couldn't stop thinking about this guy, that I would see him on campus, I'd think about him all day, and he was a psychiatrist, so he had an MD. And he was, like, "I can give you a medication for obsessive thoughts."

FISHBEIN:            Hmm.

RULE:                    And I was just like, "No, I think you're missing the point here." [Laughs.] It was, like, "I think I'm trying to tell you something. Like, I'm really—I want you to ask me. You know, like,"—and it started getting me thinking, like, you know, that something wasn't totally right. And so—so this was, like, freshman winter. I was thinking, you know, *Maybe there's something happening here. Like, this is really weird.*

And in freshman spring, my super-Christian roommate—he left Dartmouth and went back home, and so I was sort of with him out the picture, I felt a little more comfortable sort of I think approaching these ideas. And so I started considering that, you know, *Maybe I'm not straight.* And I was, like, *Maybe I'm bisexual,* you know. And that was sort of—you know, it was very much a "bi now, gay later" kind of thing for me. Like, I'm definitely not bisexual at all.

And then I started thinking, you know, to myself, even, that *I think I might be gay.* And that's when I told my—my parents. They were trying to push this girl on me from back home, and I was, like, "You know, I think I might just be gay." And—and I hadn't told anyone at Dartmouth at that point. It wasn't until I came back for sophomore fall, actually, that I told anyone. That was also the time that I told the rest of my family.

But—so, yeah, it wasn't—anyway, to answer your question, yeah, it was—I kind of realized, you know, when I was nineteen and started really coming out, you know, around the time I was twenty.

FISHBEIN: Mm-hm. And do you think that most of the people, at least at Dartmouth, were accepting of that? I know you said that if you were, you know, really flamboyant, then you would be ostracized. But it also sounds like, you know, you did kind of find *some* friends eventually after that period of depression and isolation?

RULE: Yeah. I mean, I'll say, like, I really—I mean, I had some friends, you know, mostly through linguistics, and—you know, but other than that, like, my—really my best friends—like, I didn't—I didn't make those friends until, like, in junior year. And so it was—it was a—it was a rough go. You know, I was a UGA [undergraduate adviser]. Do they still have UGAs?

FISHBEIN: Mm-hm.

RULE: Undergraduate advisers. Okay, yeah. So I was a UGA my sophomore year. And, you know, I—I told my boss, and, you know, the—the [Office of] Residential Life people were all sort of, you know, okay with it and everything. And, you know, there were definitely, you know, queer people there, who were sort of role models. And so I was a little bit more open with them. But it was still kind of like, you know,—it wasn't cool to—to talk about it and let people know. And so that was—that was a bit of a struggle.

But, yeah, no, I—you know, some of—you know, there were definitely people who—you know, it's—there was one instance I remember my senior year, where this guy that I had gone on foreign study with—he invited me over to his house. He was living on a house off campus—in a house off campus, and they were, like, a bunch of Christians living there. [Pause.]

Hello?

FISHBEIN: Yeah. I'm still here.

RULE: I'm sorry. I dropped my—I had dropped my phone. [Chuckles.]

FISHBEIN: No problem. [Chuckles.]

RULE: So anyway, so he invited me to their house over for dinner. I—I was going to be staying after graduation over the summer before I started grad school, and they had a room in their house, but they wouldn't let me live there because I was gay.

FISHBEIN: Hmm.

RULE: And so this guy had been my—he'd actually been my roommate in New Zealand, when we were studying abroad. And he—basically, he and his housemates decided that—that they couldn't have a gay person living in their house. They had a, like, house discussion about it and decided that I was—I was not included because homosexuality was immoral. So that was even my senior year, you know, among people that—you know, a guy who was ostensibly my friend. And so I don't know. It's sort of like, you know, I think that probably illustrates it a little bit.

FISHBEIN: And were those people Christian, or was there—

RULE: Yeah, they were—yeah, they were, like, in The Navigators group. I don't know whether that—like I said, that still exists, but—

FISHBEIN: Okay.

RULE: The more mainstream Christian group.

FISHBEIN: Mm-hm. Hmm. Wow, that's pretty crazy to think that, like, they had those ideas still in, you know, two thousand and when—three?

RULE: Yeah, 2004, that was.

FISHBEIN: Yeah. Wow.

So one other question I wanted to ask you: I mean, it sounds like—this might not necessarily tie into your identity as a gay person, but I personally am pretty interested in education issues. I'm going to be working in a underfunded school district next year.

RULE: Nice.

FISHBEIN: I think it's pretty amazing to me that, you know, somebody like you, from this, you know, kind of poor, rural background managed to even get to Dartmouth in the first place. Can you maybe talk about, like, you know, what your academic career was like, how you found out about Dartmouth, how you, you know, navigated the, you know, process of getting here?

RULE: Yeah. So I basically—you know, like I said, my family was really—they saw education as elitist, and, you know, they were really, like, dead-set against it. And yet at the same time, it's like, you know, you're in school, and, you know, I mean, I'm doing really well. You know, I'm the valedictorian. It's, like,—you know, there's this expectation that I, you know, should be continuing because that's what normal people do [chuckles] in society, right?

FISHBEIN: Mm-hm.

RULE: And so I just figured I would go to the local—you know, University of South Florida in Tampa. You know, it was, like, ninety minutes away. I could just go there. And ETS [Educational Testing Service]—you know, the makers of the SAT. They had a fee waiver program for—you know, for poor kids, basically. And it allowed me to apply to up to four schools.

And there was this one woman. She worked in, like, the media center at my school. She wasn't actually a teacher. And her daughter had been a child at my mom's daycare, so she kind of knew, like, what my family situation was like a little bit. And she was, like, "You know, you should really think about getting out of Florida." And she was, like, "You should"—you know. And I was, like, "Okay, whatever." I was not really taking it seriously.

And to kind of just get her off my back, I—you know, I got this fee waiver, and I was, like, *Okay, well, I can apply to four schools for free, so lemme just pick, you know, four Ivies* [Ivy League schools]. I applied to Harvard, Princeton, Yale [Universities] and Dartmouth. And I was, like, *That way, you know, she'll just sort of, you know, leave me alone about it.*

And, you know, very much to—I mean, I can only imagine what my applications were like. [Chuckles.] You know, handwritten. Like, I think I tried to do some of it on a typewriter.

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.]

RULE: And it was, like,—it was really bad. And so I—so, yeah, so I basically—I applied to all four, and I got into Dartmouth and Yale. And I—I had never been to a city at that point. I mean, I'd kind of gone into Tampa once or twice, like, for an hour or so. And the idea of New Haven [Connecticut] was just terrifying. And so I was, like, *Well, you know, Dartmouth is at least in a small town, so that'll probably be easier for me to deal with.*

And so I—I just accepted at Dartmouth. I'd never been there. I'd never seen snow. I owned two pairs of pants, actually. All the rest were shorts when I came to Hanover, and so, like, I was woefully unprepared.

And it's funny: My first roommate—he was from Vermont, and I think maybe—maybe the second thing he said to me after saying hello and telling me his name was to point out that he didn't want me to feel bad about how poor I was, because he could see, like, how little I had and the fact that my parents weren't there. He's, like, "Just so you know, like, I'm not one of these super-rich people or anything, like, you know, so I hope you don't, like, feel weird about it or anything."

And I was—I was so embarrassed! [Chuckles.] I'd worn my nicest clothes that day, I remember, because I didn't want to seem poor, you know, coming to Hanover. And I was just, like,—there was no hiding it. It was just so embarrassing.

So, yeah, it was—it was—and I'll tell you, it was really rough freshman fall. It was really rough. I was so—I just—my education had been so bad compared to the other, you know, kids that I was just, like,—I just studied all the time. There was this class called Learning@Dartmouth that I think the Academic Skills Center was—ran it. It was, like, basically

like study skills and, like, how to survive and all that. And I took that. I got PE credits for it, and it was—they were, like, you know, “Wake up the same time every day.” You know, “Sit in the front row.” And I did everything that they advised. And I was still just struggling so much.

And ironically, my lowest grade at Dartmouth was in intro Psych and obviously, now I’m a full professor in the best psychology department in the world, and I’ve been the department chair. [Laughs.] There’s a terrible irony there—

FISHBEIN: Right.

RULE: —that I love to tell my students, but—but it was—it was a real struggle. I was—I was having a really, really hard time catching up. And then, you know, obviously, I ended up doing really well, and so I’m glad that I—I stuck with it. Again, my attitude was just, like, *I’m gonna ride this until they throw me out*. And so that’s sort of just what I did, and here I am. I’m still—I’m still riding until they throw me out!

FISHBEIN: Maybe some tenacity from that experience.

RULE: Yeah. And I think, you know, growing up the way that I did was I had to be—I had to be pretty scrappy, you know. Like, it as—perseverance is what, you know, got me through. And I think that’s the difference between my siblings and me primarily, is that I never gave up, with anything.

One time, my brother was, like, you know,—he was, like, beating me up for some reason or another, and I just kept fighting back. I don’t even remember it. He just tells the story now. He just kept punching me in the head until eventually I lost consciousness because I just wouldn’t give up fighting. And so [chuckles] that sort of speaks to where things went, but—

FISHBEIN: Wow.

I wonder if you could maybe say a little bit more about that, like, class and other forms of, like, culture shock you did experience upon getting to Dartmouth. I mean, the idea of people here being really, really rich probably didn’t go away after your first day here freshman fall.

RULE:

Oh, my God, no. And, you know, the nice thing about Dartmouth is that because it's—because of the outdoorsy culture there, like, it wasn't so obvious the way that it probably would have been if I'd gone to Yale or I'd gone to Princeton or something, right?—where I think the wealth is probably much more in your face. At Dartmouth it wasn't cool to show that you were rich, for most people, so it made it a little bit easier to blend in. But, I mean, it was just, like, you know, things like going to Molly's [Restaurant & Bar] for dinner. Like, that was something I couldn't do. Like, I didn't have the money. Like, I worked—you know, I worked from my first—even before school started in freshman fall, I was working. You know, I had different jobs on campus. I worked in DDS [Dartmouth Dining Services]. I worked at—you know, at Dick's House. I worked at the [William Jewett] Tucker Foundation. You know, I always had a job, and I needed that money to pay—to pay Dartmouth, frankly.

You know, financial aid wasn't as generous as it is now. And there was this expectation that your family was supposed to contribute. There was—literally on my financial aide statement said parent contribution and I wasn't getting that from my parents. And so I had to find a way to pay their share and my share. And so—so like, you know, it was just—I mean, even the idea of going to a restaurant, growing up, was this, like, you know, rich man's thing. Like, we would do that, like, almost never. Like, I think maybe once every few years that we'd go out to eat.

And so people would just be, like, “Oh, you know, like, I don't feel like DDS tonight. Like, you know, let's go—let's go into Hanover and eat something.” And, like, that just wasn't a reality for me, let alone, like, finding the money to buy a winter coat.

I remember my first Thanksgiving. I had no idea that—that DDS would close, and I didn't have anywhere to go. And so I went—there used to be—I think there's a CVS [Pharmacy] there now, but there was a grocery store at the time, and, like, I went, like, just before they closed and just bought a bunch of canned food. And I literally ate canned peas for the entire, you know, weekend, because that was all I could afford. Even DDS was—back then, I think you guys—you



have, like, an all-you-can-eat thing now, but back then it was just, like, you had, like, a food account, and it was like going to a restaurant. And so you had to pay for every thing.

And I would just—I would always just buy the cheapest stuff possible because I needed to make the money last. And so I never thought about, like, what I wanted to eat or what I needed to eat; I was just, like, *What can I afford to eat on campus?*

And I eventually decided that breakfast on campus was too expensive, so I started buying my—I'd buy groceries in town and just eat, like, the cheapest cereal. Just Raisin Bran. And, you know, and milk. And that was—that was it. And so—so, yeah, I was—and even still, I was eating so much better than I did growing up, you know, so—so it felt great in a way, but it was just the little things.

Like, you know, people would go on spring break places. There was no spring break for me. You know, there was no going away for Thanksgiving. It was, like, I could barely afford to go home in between, you know, the terms, because I didn't have money to fly and all that. You know, it was my—it was my first time on a plane when I came to Dartmouth. I remember being so excited. It was, like, the coolest thing. My whole life, I had wanted to ride on an airplane.

And it was just such a difference—you know, every little thing, every expense mattered in a way that I think a lot of people didn't have to consider. And also it was just, you know, like, I didn't want to be totally embarrassed, you know, by my clothes and everything. And so, yeah, it was—it was rough, but—

And Dartmouth was such a place of privilege for me because I got—I had—I could access health care now, like, as much as I wanted. You know, like, you know, it was really great. You know, I'd had some really horrible experiences growing up, where I didn't have access to health care. And it—it was really, really rough. And so if you go into details, that would be [chuckles]—they're a little bit gross, so I'll spare you that for now. But—but anyway,—yeah.

FISHBEIN: Wow. [Chuckles.] That's a pretty—pretty crazy story. I mean, thank you for sharing that with me.

RULE: Yeah, yeah.

FISHBEIN: I guess—do—how do you think that these kind of other, you know, obstacles and other sorts of discrimination impacted, like, the ways you could express yourself as a gay person at Dartmouth? You know, like, I think we both heard of this term, like, “intersectionality”? I'm wondering if, like, that's something you've thought at all about, with your experience here.

RULE: Yeah. I mean, so it's really interesting. I guess it was my—my junior year, there was this lacrosse player, who—he'd gone to, you know, a private high school. His dad was one of the creators of Viagra, so they were, like, crazy rich. And he—he was in the closet, and we were hooking up from time to time. And, you know, when he came out, he decided to come out and, like, made this big thing of it, and it was, like, you know, I—I think it was a lot easier for him than it would have been for someone—like, he had a lot of friends on campus.

He—you know, he came from a place of great wealth. His family was a bit resistant, you know, to him coming out, but they were ultimately very supportive. And he was considered this great hero, you know, for coming out. He was on ESPN and everything. And it's, like, *Well, I knew him when, you know, he was*—I'll be very, you know,—I shouldn't say this in the interview. I don't know if it'll be too graphic. But I knew him when he was basically just, like, you know, not necessarily the nicest guy. He was just sort of getting—getting what he needed to satisfy his urges and then moving on, without much concern for the other people that were involved.

And, you know, it was—it was kind of—it was a little bit—I guess,—it was frankly a little galling to see how much—how different it was for someone who had resources, who had money, who, you know, was in a fraternity, who was in a secret society, who, you know, had this sort of network because of sort of the privileges that he had had. I'd never

even heard of lacrosse. [Laughs.] You know, I didn't even know what it was.

And, you know, it's just, like, you know, I think all of that privilege did make it easier for him to come out. I think for some people, you know, maybe they come from traditional, you know, wealthy backgrounds and their parents are very sort of, you know, buttoned down, and it—it's hard for them. I'm not saying that, you know, my experience was harder per se in that respect. But certainly, the support wasn't there.

And I knew a lot of people who came from wealthy families who cut them off, you know, once they came out, and yet at the same time, maybe that was easier for me because I—like I said, I didn't have anything to lose with my family. You know, it's, like, *What are they—yeah, they're gonna tell me I'm going to hell, and, you know, you know, really twist the screws on me with it, but I don't ever have to see them again. It's not like I need anything from them.*

So—so in a way maybe that made it a little bit easier. But I think it definitely meant that I—you know, I was sort of shutting off the past. You know, there was no going home after I came out. And Dartmouth wasn't—Dartmouth didn't particularly want me, you know. Like, we didn't—being a first-gen student wasn't a thing when I was at Dartmouth. That was—I'd never heard that term.

And it was like the—you know, these were just things you just didn't—you just wanted to pass, you know. You wanted to pass as straight. You wanted to pass as not being poor—you sort of made the best of things. And so—so, yeah, it think, you know, there are advantages and disadvantages to sort of my—my class background.

And it's funny. You know, I think that when I look over the arc of my life, like, obviously being gay is a big part of, you know, my identity, if for no other reason than I'm, like,—I don't know whether you've Googled me or not, but I'm basically considered the world's expert on gaydar because of the work that I do, the research I do. And so it's, like, it's hard to say that being gay isn't a big part of who I am. But, at the same time, I think that my—my class actually influenced my life much more than my—my sexuality.

FISHBEIN: Mm-hm. Yeah, I mean, this idea of wanting to pass, that kind of—that must have taken a big toll on you. That must have taken a lot of work.

RULE: Yeah, no, it was very effortful. And the thing is—and that's what got me interested in gaydar research, honestly. And it's, like, you know, I was really interested in how it is that people pass and how it is that some people, like me—like, how was it that I went for so long, you know, nineteen years, with no idea that I was gay, even though other people, you know, would say things to me. I thought they were just being mean. But it's, like, how did they pick up on that when I didn't, and everything like that?

And once I learned—once I started doing the research and now that I know, like, how well people can actually detect sexuality from non-verbal cues, that's exactly what I—what I research. It was, like,—it made it really difficult, because I would—I'd go back to the South, and I'd be like, *Oh, shit! Like, you know, people can tell even if they don't know they can tell. And, like, I don't know how obvious it is now that I've come out, you know.* And, like, there's constantly this effort to monitor and to hide it and to be worried about it. And that was very much alive when I was in Hanover as well.

FISHBEIN: So I'm assuming that the school that you went to growing up didn't really provide much in the way of, like, sexual education. Was that—how was that something you encountered when you were at Dartmouth? I mean, I know there must have been some kind of fears of, like, HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] in the gay community at that point. Had you, like, heard of that, what were your kind of preconceived notions of that, coming here, and how did you, like address those?

RULE: Yeah. Yeah, they definitely did—they definitely did anonymous testing on campus. I remember going and getting tested and, you know, being, you know, told that I should, you know, definitely only have oral sex with a condom, which was not a very attractive prospect to my sexual partners. [Both chuckle.] And so—so that—you know, there was definitely some of that.

I got involved with the health education stuff at Dick's House. I was—and even a sort of peer adviser, sexual assault peer adviser, drug and alcohol peer adviser. I don't know whether they have those programs anymore, but—so I was doing a lot of that.

And I sort of, you know, jumped into, you know, health stuff with both feet. And so I was getting a lot of that education, because I was part of the one who ended up doing it. And so—so there was sort of that going on, but—

And also, I think, a big thing was my freshman year, they for the first time offered a women's studies class that was just about sexual minorities, basically—like, intro to, you know, LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] studies or something like that, which I ended up taking that course my junior year. They were offering it every other year—they offered it my freshman year, and then I took it my junior year.

And that was really—there was a lot of gay history there and other things, and the professor who taught it actually—when I went to grad school, he ended up—he was an adjunct, so he was just coming to Hanover to teach it, and he was, like, a—a gay activist and so on back in the day. And he lived down the street from me when I was in grad school, and we became very good friends. And so—in fact, it was his seventieth birthday on Sunday. I just called him.

And so—so, yeah, I think that helped a lot too with understanding and sort of learning about gay history and knowing, you know, sort of—having a greater sense of place. By my junior year, Admissions had started really recruiting sexual minorities. They made it an initiative there. So I was a '04, and the incoming '06s had some really flamboyant guys in their—in their class. And women as well, who were very butch.

And really—it—it started to chan- —to turn the tide on campus in a really big way, having these new people come in, and they had sort of, you know, a cohort. And they really formed a community, and they were the ones who I think started drawing in, you know, the—the older people a little bit, who—people like me, who were, like, “Oh, you know, like, this isn't—you know, we don't do this here, you know?”

This isn't cool here, you know?" And so it really started to normalize things in a big way on campus.

FISHBEIN: Wow. So it sounds like that administrative decision was pretty impactful in, like, changing campus culture.

RULE: I would say so, for sure, yeah. I would say that was the biggest thing I noticed in my four years there, that really bringing in and recruiting those '06s, that—that changed things.

FISHBEIN: And do you think they did that in response to, like, a changing national conversation? I mean, I'm from Massachusetts, and, I remember that like, when I was growing up, there was a big conversation about, like, whether or not we should, like, legalize gay marriage. Was that something you were hearing about when you were here at Dartmouth? Like, was that—were gay issues really in the news a lot then?

RULE: No, no. I think it was just there was an understanding that, you know, the campus needed to diversify, and, you know, decisions were made that, you know, we needed, you know, a greater LGBT presence. There might have been some kind of—I don't know if the campus had engaged in some kind of self-study or something, but—to sort of identify that that was a place they needed to grow, but—but that was ahead of all that.

It was my senior year that Massachusetts legalized same-sex marriage, and I remember we were so excited. And so—yeah, anyway, I actually got engaged that year, in the summer of '04. And we were so excited. We were so worried that they were going to reverse the law, because everyone was working against it, right?—all these people that we—we waited to get married. We waited ten years to get married. And so, yeah, but it was a really big deal.

FISHBEIN: I know you—

RULE: But it really hadn't hit campus. It was, like, April of 2004, and I graduated in June, so—

FISHBEIN: Mm-hm.

I know you wrote some in the memo you filled out to sign up for SpeakOut about the story behind your engagement, if you could go into that a little bit here, so we have that on this record?

RULE: Yeah. Absolutely, yeah. So I mentioned before, you know, that I was on the crew team, and there was this guy and I couldn't stop thinking about him. And so eventually, I used to see him around campus, and my friends would—eventually, after a while, they would be, like, “Hey, have you ever noticed that guy who seems to be staring at you?” But I was, like, you know, I thought he might be, but, you know, I didn't think anything of it. And he—you know, I knew this guy had a girlfriend and everything, and I still had a lot of friends on the crew team.

And eventually,—mostly the women's crew team—and my best friend, who was on the women's team—she told me that she had heard that his coach had actually asked the team if he and another guy on the team were dating because they were roommates and they were, like, inseparable. He wanted to know whether they were—you know, they were a gay couple secretly. And they weren't. Not at all.

But when I heard that, I was, like, *Okay, if I'm not the only one who thinks this guy might be gay,—I was, like, I feel like the way he looks at me is the way that I was looking at him when I didn't know that I was gay.* And so I—so one night—it was April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2003, I decided I was going to e-mail him because that's the way we did things back then. We had something called BlitzMail. I don't know if you've come across anything on that.

FISHBEIN: Yeah, we still have it.

RULE: Oh, you have Blitz—so I Blitzed him, as we would say, and it was basically, like, *Okay, if he's been staring at me the way that people say he has, and I think he has, he'll definitely know who I am, because I totally knew who he was before he—you know, years before.* And he writes back the next morning. I didn't sleep all night. And he writes back and he's, like, “Hey, I think you sent me this e-mail by mistake.”

Because I had just wrote, “Hey, what’s up?” That’s all I wrote.

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.]

RULE: And he was, like, “I think you sent me this by mistake.” And I was, like, *I’m going for it*. So I wrote back, and I was, like, “No, actually, I meant to e-mail you. Like, here’s the deal. You know, my friends think you’re staring at me. I wondered whether you might be interested,” so on and so forth. And he’s, like, “I’m really sorry for giving you the wrong impression. I’m not gay. I do notice—my friends—people do notice I stare at people. I have a hard time recognizing faces, and so I find myself staring at people.”

And I was, like,—I was—I was embarrassed. I was actually really scared, too. I was scared that the heavyweight men’s crew team—he—he was the captain. And they were—they were not—they were pretty [unintelligible], I guess is the way to put it. They were, like,—they were like the football team light at that point. They were some pretty conservative, intense guys. And big.

And I was—I considered that I might get the shit beaten out of me for doing this. And fortunately, that never happened. And then he—he was an ’03, so he was a year ahead of me. I was, like, *Okay, I just have to make it till June. He’ll graduate. This’ll be over.*

And then I—I got back for senior year. I led a trip—you know, a freshman trip. I got off the bus from coming back from my trip, and I see him there. As I’m getting off, he’s, like, walking cross the [Dartmouth] Green. It’s, like, *What the hell is this guy doing here?* It turned out that he was staying for an extra year to do research before applying to med school. And so—and so I was, like, *Uch! At least he’s not good at recognizing faces. He probably doesn’t even know who I am.*

And so then I would sort of see him around campus from time to time. And eventually one day I was—I was at the gym on the—the erg, the rowing machine, which I would still do, and I see—I can see the reflection in the window in front of me that he’s coming up beside me, to row next to me. And



I was, like, *Oh, man!* Like, this guy—he’s in the Dartmouth Hall of Fame for rowing. Like, he was the captain of the team. He’s, like, this amazing rower. *Like, he’s probably noticing how bad I am.*

And so he’s taking his time getting ready, taking off his shorts because he’s just going to row in his spandex, and I’m just telling myself, *Okay, do not look at him. Just, you know, focus on finishing the workout.* And so then I eventually do. I finish. I’m about to get up and walk away. It turns out he was waiting for me to finish because he wanted to say something to me.

And so he was, like, “Hey, I just wanted to say hi.” He’s, like, “I feel like every time I see you it’s really awkward. I just wanted to let you know that, like, you don’t have to, you know, worry about it—you know, me—like, feeling weird.” He’s, like, “You can say hi when you see me.” I was, like, “Thanks. That’s really nice of you.” And he’s, like, “You know, if you wanted, we could even get lunch some day.” He’s, like, “Most of my friends graduated, so, like, I don’t really have many friends on campus anymore.” I was, like, “Okay, maybe that’d be a—you know, I can do that sometime. You know, I’ll Blitz you.” And, of course, I immediately went home and Blitzed him right away.

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.]

RULE: There was no way I was going to let this get away from me, you know? It was my chance. And so we went the very next day to have lunch, and I remember we were—we were in line at I think it’s—it was called The Wrap [at Hanover] at the time. Maybe it’s Boloco now. I don’t know whether that’s even still there.

FISHBEIN: Mm-hm.

RULE: I hated the restaurant, actually. It was like this burrito place. I didn’t think it was very good. It was eating out, which—I was, like, *Okay, I’m going to have to spend, like, real money on this.* And—but I was, like, *I’m not missing this opportunity.* And basically we—we were in—we were both in line. He was from Florida, too, which was nice. We could sort of bond in that respect—like, why we both left Florida and having sort

of these southern families and everything. And even though he had a very different class background than I did, being that he was this like, excellent rower, he would have to be.

And so—so, you know, we—we basically—we sat down to lunch, and, you know, we were talking about home and everything, and he was—you know, our feelings about—I was, like, “For me being gay, it’s difficult.” And he’s, like, “Well,”—he’s, like, “I guess I should tell you, I’m actually—things have changed since the last time, you know, you had talked to me.” He’s, like, “I—I think I’m actually more like you than I realized.”

*At that point, I’m, like, Okay, this is another, like, closeted athlete who just wants to have sex with me and move on, the same way that the lacrosse guy did. And I was, like, But for this guy, you know, he has a special place for me, given our history. And I was, like, You know, whatever. You know, I’ll go with it.*

And honestly, we had such a nice time that day at lunch, like, we basically just started talking then, and, I mean, we haven’t been able to shut up since. And so I was really resistant. You know, I was graduating. We were both going to be moving to Boston for grad school. And I was, like, *Once we get to Boston, he’s gonna go crazy, and he’s gonna want to have sex with all these people, and, you know, there’s no—I’m just gonna get hurt in this.*

So I was, like, “You know, I don’t think we should see each other. You know, we can be friends, whatever.” And eventually we just—we kept hanging out, and I eventually just realized that I had completely fallen in love with him. And so it was, you know, a few months later that I—I woke up one day, and I was, like, you know, *I just feel like, you know, he’s the person I want to spend the rest of my life with.*

So—so I proposed to him. And—and he said yes, and then a week later, he proposed to me, and we—we gave each other rings and everything, and like I said, we stayed engaged for—for ten years. His parents were really, really unhappy with him being gay. They never saw it coming, and it was—that was one of the reasons that we were so willing to, like, not get—they—they were not going to have us getting

married. At the time, they were really hoping that it was just going to pass for him; it was just a phase.

And even when we got married in 2014, they didn't come to the wedding, after ten years of knowing me and sort of—you know, I thought that they had sort of accepting things by then, but they just couldn't stomach it. So they didn't come. But, you know, that it is what it is, and so—but, yeah, you know, so we're—we're very happily married.

We were long distance when I took the job here in Canada. He was still in med school because he did an M.D./Ph.D. [doctor of medicine/doctor of philosophy], and he—then he had residency and a fellowship, and we were apart for five years. And I think even, you know, from that very first day that we had lunch—it was February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004—we have just cherished every moment we've had together.

And so even just, you know,—yeah, I mean, I can't wait to see him tonight. You know, it's like—and that's such a lucky and special thing. And for me, you know, this guy that, you know, I—you know, I sort of dreamt about, frankly, for years before he even knew my name—you know, it's like—it's like a dream come true. You know, it's like this guy—this first guy, like, you know, who sort of blows me away, that—because I think he's just so, you know, handsome—that the idea that, you know, he would eventually one day be my husband—you know, it's just really—it's incredible to me. It's the best thing that's ever happened to me, easily, in my life, so—

FISHBEIN: What's his name?

RULE: Jay.

FISHBEIN: Last name, too? We're just asked to get—

RULE: Yeah.

FISHBEIN: —biographical information from people.

RULE: Yeah, definitely. It's [James R.] Conner, C-o-n-n-e-r, and he's a '03 [Class of 2003].

FISHBEIN: That's a really beautiful story.

RULE: Yeah. And I [chuckles]—I have tears in my eyes. I've been holding it back! [Laughs.] I didn't want to lose composure, but, yeah, it's not easy for me because it really is—I'm—it really is, like,—it's made my life, you know? So—

FISHBEIN: What is it about him, other—other than looks that, you know—

RULE: Oh, yeah! I mean, he is—he is the sweetest and kindest person I've ever met. I mean, he's extremely smart. When he took his first—I remember when he was studying for the boards—you know, there are different steps for medical school. You know, there are three steps to get, you know, licenses as a doctor. And the first one, step one of the boards, he—I remember he was studying and everything, and he ended up actually scoring outside of the distribution. He got such a high score that it was—it was literally off the chart. So he is—he is super smart.

Yeah, and like I said, he's so nice. That was the thing. He was really nice to me, you know, when I—when I Blitzed him that first time. And, you know, he was very understanding about it. But he's—he's really just the kindest and most compassionate person. It's—yeah, I just—we just—we haven't ever gotten tired of each other, which is really something, I mean, because it's been fifteen years that we've been together.

And I tell you, when we first started, especially because I was, like, *This isn't gonna last*. It's, like, *I'm just gonna enjoy it while it lasts*. And I guess kind of like what I said about even just my career and, you know, academically—Dartmouth, the whole thing. And every day I feel like, you know, I might go home tonight and he might tell me it's over, and if he does, I would just be grateful for the fifteen years that we've had together, because they've been the best of my life, you know?

Just being with him, I just—I love him so much. You know, he really is just—he's a beautiful human being, inside and out. And honestly, I can't think of anything—I mean, I'm sure—I mean, there are things he does that are, like,—can

be, you know, annoying from time to time. He doesn't put his dishes away, and he leaves his laundry on the floor and things like that, but—but, yeah, he's just—he's a really special person, so—

FISHBEIN: Wow. Yeah, it sounds like he was maybe, you know, a step up from some of the previous relationships you had had before in your life, you know?

RULE: Absolutely.

FISHBEIN: Both with other men and with your, you know, family too.

RULE: Yeah. That's it. You know, we really are a family, you know, the two of us and our cat, you know. He doesn't feel particularly close to his parents, either, you know, especially now. And, you know, we've really—we've made a family together and that's—that's something. You know, we—you know, we bought a house together, which is not easy in Toronto. And, you know, we've—we've really built our home.

You know, we had to get this place—like, housing is extremely expensive here. And so, you know, we bought this place, and we had it then fixed up, and, you know, we did that together. And we paid people to do it. We didn't do the work. But, you know, we planned it all out and went through it and lived through the renovation, and it really felt like building a home together.

And we've really built a life together, and that's just it. You know, coming from sort of the place that I did in particular to now, it's, like, you know, we have—we have so much, you know? And it's really something that we—we've done together. No one—no one gave us anything, you know? We didn't have, you know, support from our parents. We didn't have help. It was really just the two of us for a lot of years.

And, you know, all that time through graduate school, you know, supporting each other and, you know—and living together. And I remember, gosh, even then, like, when we moved in together, his parents knew that we were—that he was gay, and for years they—they thought we had separate bedrooms, you know? Because he wouldn't tell them that we—we shared a bed.

And so just sort of even going through all of that together and finding our way, we really sort of evolved. And for him—you know, he didn't—like, I didn't realize I was gay until the end of my freshman year. He didn't realize until after he graduated. And so that was a bit of a different thing for—for him as well. And to just sort of go through that with him, we've—we really have grown together a lot.

FISHBEIN: What was it about him that made you think he might have been gay, you know, the first time—couple of times you saw him?

RULE: Yeah, it was—it was—it was the eye contact. You know, he would—he would just sort of—he would sort of look and kind of linger. And I was, like, you know, that's interesting because that's what I—as I said, that's what I found myself doing. Like, when I would see him and occasionally other people, I would, like,—I just couldn't take my eyes off of them. Like, for whatever reason, I just, like,—and then I would think about them all day, like I said.

And when I saw him sort of, you know, doing something similar, like staring at me and not necessarily realizing that he was—when my friends started pointing it out, then I was, like, *You know, this seems a lot like what I went through.*

You know, and he—he doesn't remember doing it. Even now, like, he—he wasn't aware that he was doing it. And so, yeah, so it was a little bit different for him. I think I had more self-awareness about it. But—but yeah. He was—so he—as I mentioned, he graduated, and he was living off campus in a house with a bunch of rowers while he was working at the med school, doing research. And, you know, when we started sort of seeing each other, it was very, very secret.

And he told his housemates that he was moving to Boston early to go to grad school, and he actually was living with me in Butterfield [Hall]. [Laughs.] And so they would see him up on campus. He was, like, “Oh, yeah, I'm just back visiting today. I'm still working,” you know, but—

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.]

RULE: But going back and forth. So, yeah, and then when they eventually found out that he was gay, you know, it was, like,—it was a huge deal. It was a really big deal. And, you know, one of them—again, even just a gay athlete at the time was really weird on campus, and so it was—it wasn't easy for him, coming—coming out like that. And, you know, sort of being a part of, you know, helping him through that I think brought us closer together as well.

FISHBEIN: Yeah, I mean, it sounds like he might have dealt with some homophobia from that rowing coach you were mentioning earlier.

RULE: Yeah. Yeah.

FISHBEIN: Yeah, and I—I don't know, is that something you—you said that on one hand, you know, the Dartmouth administration was trying to, like, be more inclusive, you know, and bring more, you know, sexual minorities in. But also, yeah, he had this problem with the coach. And you were saying that, you know, you had this therapist who was telling you that, you know, your desires were, you know, abnormalities.

RULE: Yeah. Yeah, he totally didn't get it. Yeah, no, and that's—that's just it. Like, I think Admissions made a decision they needed to bring more gay people to campus, but, you know,—but the individuals, the institutions, the history, the tradition. Tradition's a big thing at Dartmouth, right? And all of that was not accepting of it. There was a lot of resistance.

And so, you know, I—I—well, I would say obviously, but it may not be obvious anymore, but, like, you know, I mean, I never went out to frats. Like, there was no place for me there. You know, I wouldn't be welcome there. Guys were called faggot all the time when they were there. People were threatened. You know, it was, like,—it was a really hostile environment.

And people thought that was okay back then, you know? You know, they thought it was—it was sort of like just a—it was like having just a political view that, you know, that was just something that was wrong and gross, and, you know, it wasn't necessarily considered unacceptable to be intolerant of that.

FISHBEIN: Wow. Yeah, it really sounds like homophobia was normalized on campus when you were here.

RULE: Yeah, I'd say so.

FISHBEIN: So you said that you, you know, didn't really fit into fraternities. Where did you go, you know, on the weekends to hang out? Where did you really find peer support? I know you mentioned, the, you know, Christians at one point and the Quaker group that you started. Was that really like your main social group, or were there others?

RULE: Honestly, to be really frank, I was pretty isolated. [Laughs.] You know, I mean, I had a few friends, and, you know, like I said, the linguists—there weren't a lot of linguistics majors, so we—a group of us would have lunch, you know, most days of the week.

When I went on the Foreign Study Program trip to New Zealand for linguistics and anthropology—and it was the first year, actually, that they did it, in 2003, when I went. And I made some friends there. That was my first time in a city, and we were in Auckland, actually. And I was, like, *Okay, I'm in a city now. I'm gay, and I'm gonna—I'm gonna just make the most of it.*

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.]

RULE: And I sort of just did my own thing compared to the rest of the group. And it was, like,—it was, like, a week before I had a boyfriend, you know? This, you know, New Zealander. And I kind of hung out with him and his friends the entire time I was there. But then I—I grew close to a couple of people on the trip, and so my senior year they were really my best friends.

And, yeah, but honestly it was really—it was kind of just, you know, me alone for most of my time at Dartmouth. Dartmouth was a rough place for me because of that. And I have a lot of mixed feelings about that. It's funny: My husband—he would love to move back to Hanover, you know, and take a job at the med school and me in the psych department, and I just—I don't think I could ever—I could



never do that, myself. It was—it—we have a very different experiences at Dartmouth.

You know, he remembers being there and being in this rowing community and, you know, having a really rich life in this beautiful environment. And for me, I remember, like,—I honestly remember sitting in my room on a Friday night and being, like, *There is just nowhere for me to go. There's nothing for me to do. Like, I've got nothing.* And I would just go, like, walk around campus because there just wasn't—there wasn't anything happening.

At one point, you know, I—I dated a couple of guys from town. [Chuckles.] It's really funny: I dated one guy. We went out a couple of times. He—there used to be a Ben & Jerry's in Hanover. He worked at the Ben & Jerry's. I met him there because I had taken my floor to a Vermonster [sundae], and he was flirting with me when I, you know, made the order. So we, you know, hung out a couple of times. And then he was really—we—it wasn't going to happen between us.

And then shortly after, I started—I sort of had this flirtation with this busboy at Molly's one time, and then we started dating. It turns out they were ex-boyfriends because they were the only two gay people they knew.

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.]

RULE: And so it was really awkward. And so—but, yeah, and the—the kid from Molly's was actually a high school student. He went to Lebanon High [School]. I was, like, *Oh, my God, I totally, like,—I can't be dating, you know, this sixteen-year-old. Like, this is—this feels—I'm gonna get in trouble.*

And so—so, yeah, I mean, I just kind of made my way and really just, you know,—just made the best of things as well as I could, but never really had—and even once the '06s came in, there was a little bit more of a community on campus, I was very sort of circumspect about it because, you know, honestly, I'd been wounded so many times.

I remember the first guy I ever hooked up with, and I was so happy. I was so, so happy, and the entire time it was, like, “You know, I don't want just to—I don't want just a hookup.

Like, I really—you know, I'm really looking for, like, a relationship." He's, like, "Oh, yeah, I am too. I am too." And, you know, then we—you know, we hooked up, and four days later he wouldn't—he wouldn't, you know, respond to my Blitzes. Like, he wouldn't Blitz me back. And it was just, like,—

And so, you know, it was just that kind of thing. I had been hurt so many times and tried to make friends with other gay people, and it was, like, they just, you know,—it never really happened, you know?

And so—so that was—yeah, I really didn't have many friends. I didn't really have much of a social support network I found my way, like I said, with the linguists. I really had a place at Dick's House and sort of the outreach work there, but it was—it was all kind of through that and just sort of, you know, being a UGA, you know, involved in that and just knowing people and having these things. But more often than not, I was just by myself.

FISHBEIN: How do you think you coped with those feelings of, like, hurt and isolation when you were here?

RULE: Yeah, you know, honestly, they were pretty familiar to me [chuckles], as you can imagine from—from growing up, and so it was—it was easy enough, like, to just sort of, you know, just keep going. That was—that was what I knew of life, right? That's sort of just the only way I knew how to be. And so—so, I mean, it was—it wasn't fun.

But I studied a lot, and that paid off because, like I said, when I started out, like, I was—I really had to do some remedial work, you know, academically. And, you know, I ended up getting into pretty much every grad program I wanted, which was a huge shock. Like, my grades weren't that great, you know, in the beginning at Dartmouth. In my senior year I got straight A's every term. And so, like I said, I got into, you know, my first choice of grad school, and, you know, I—I always thought, you know, like, *I—I don't know if I'm gonna make it. I don't know if I'm gonna make it.* And I just—I just kept going. And things worked out. But I really threw myself into working, I guess, was the way that I got through it.

FISHBEIN: Yeah, I mean, it sounds like you—you did make it. [Laughs.]

RULE: Yeah! [Laughs.]

FISHBEIN: Wow.

So one thing you had talked about was Dartmouth traditions and how you kind of, you know, felt like they had some of this, you know, maybe homophobic culture within them.

RULE: Mmm.

FISHBEIN: But it also sounds like you participated in them. You mentioned that you were, you know, active in Trips, at least for one year. How did you kind of navigate that culture that you might not have really fit into?

RULE: Yeah, it's funny. I didn't do a Freshman Trip myself. I was, like, *Oh, my God, like*,—first of all, I didn't have the money. And second, I was, like, *There's no way I can go on some camping trip right before I have to start class. Like, I'm—you know, like, I need to be putting my best foot forward, not, you know, recovering from some trip outdoors and in this environment that I don't even know.* Like, you know, I grew up in a swamp, like,—and so I didn't do it.

And then, you know, like, I—I didn't even want to go to New Zealand on the,—you know, the Foreign Study Program, and I was just, like,—I was, like, *Well, you know, it's like a Dartmouth thing to do, this FSP, so I guess I should do it.* And so I went, you know, and then I sort of was, like, *You know, this is my last year. I should get involved in more things. I'm gonna lead a trip, because I didn't have one, and, you know, I think—*

At that time, I was, like,—I was kind of doing a little bit of advocacy. I felt that it was important. I had already decided, you know, earlier, shortly after I realized I was gay, that I—I—if I wanted things to change, that I needed to be out, right? I needed to be the change. And so—so I was, like, *I'm gonna go on this trip, and I'm gonna let these—these freshmen come in, and they're gonna—they're gonna see*

*Big Gay Nick, and that's gonna be that. And they're gonna see that they are, you know, like, gay people here.*

And my friend made me a hemp necklace with some rainbow beads on it that I wore the entire time, and I was very open about being gay to them. It's funny: I think apparently, I made a lot of the—a lot of the—I guess they were '08s—a lot of them very uncomfortable.

In fact, there's one guy who—who was on that trip that I led, who is now also a social psychologist, like I am. He's in my field. And he sent me this e-mail a couple of years ago. He was applying for a job in my department here, and he sent me an e-mail apologizing for his behavior on the trip. And I had no idea what he was talking about. [Chuckles.] So apparently he must have felt really uncomfortable around me and thought that he, like, had done something that made that obvious and felt that he needed to now apologize. [Chuckles.] And so—otherwise I wasn't going to—you know, we weren't going to interview him.

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.]

RULE: And so—so that was interesting. But—but, yeah, you know, I sort of, like, you know, *I'm gonna try to just make the best of things here*, like I said. And so, you know, I was involved on—I was very involved on campus but just sort of not in the sort of traditional Dartmouth ways in terms of, you know, the frats. And I never ran around the bonfire. Like, I thought that was crazy. The idea of an enormous fire seems really weird to me. And so, you know, I didn't do a lot of that kind of stuff, but the more formal, you know, I guess, college-sanctioned activities—those were—those were more my fare, I suppose.

FISHBEIN: Wow! It sounds like you were really kind of putting yourself out there through this, you know, Big Gay Nick advocacy.

RULE: Yeah. I was, like, *Somebody has to be, right?* I was, like, you know,—like, otherwise, you know,—it's, like, *nothing is going to—nothing is going to change. Nothing is going to happen. My life isn't going to be happier being in the closet, like, so, like, I might as well just be open about this, because I don't want to have to have this secret.*

And so—and, I mean, even still, I was—I—I wasn't as open as I—certainly as I am now and not as much as I could have been. But I was, like, *If people wonder or they ask, like, I'm gonna tell them. You know, I'm gonna let people know.* And, of course, you know, once some—among this closeted network of people, once, you know, you're—you show any sign of being out, everybody knows it, right? You know, it travels, you know, like—like wildfire.

And—and so then it was just kind of like, *Yeah, all right. Well, here I am, and I'm gonna do it, and I'm gonna—I guess I'll be the gay UGA, and, you know, whatever, and that'll be fine, so—*

FISHBEIN: Do you think you got any real pushback from people for taking that attitude?

RULE: I definitely think it certainly—well, it definitely cost me sexual opportunities, as I said, and it definitely kept people from wanting to be my friend. I lost friends, you know, by doing that, and I think I was also prevented from having other friends who wouldn't have wanted people to see them with me because they—because I was too openly gay. And they would have been worried that it would cause people to have suspicions about them.

And I definitely made people uncomfortable at times. And I didn't like making people uncomfortable, and so—it wasn't my way really, and so I would try to—you know, I wouldn't—I wouldn't, like, come right out with it, but—but I wouldn't hide it, either.

I had sort of—and, again, I think part of this was the Christianity. I was, like, *I can't lie. You know, lying is something that I think is wrong. And so I'm not gonna lie about this, but I'm also not necessarily gonna be—I'm not gonna offer it.* And so—so that was—that was tricky, you know? That was tricky.

FISHBEIN: It sounds like, though, you still managed to, you know, be the advocate that you wanted to be.

RULE: Yeah, I guess to some extent. Not as much as I would have liked to have been, you know, but I did—I did the best that I could for the time that we were in then, I think.

FISHBEIN: I want to talk to you a little bit more about your FSP. So you said that when you came to Dartmouth, that was your first time on an airplane, and now you're flying, what?—like fifteen, sixteen hours to another country. That must have been a, you know, huge kind of culture shock experience, right?

RULE: Oh, my God! It was, like,—it was, like, a twenty-hour flight! [Laughter.] The thing is, I was so—we got—they, like,—they kept feeding us. It was great! Like, the food was—you know, I was just, like, so excited. The food was so much better than on a domestic flight.

But, yeah, I mean, I was, like,—it was—it was—it was very bizarre for me. And I was, like,—you know, Dartmouth gave very good financial aid to help with the FSP, which made it possible. But even then, I was super nervous about, you know, being in this other country and everything. Fortunately, the exchange rate was really good for the U.S. dollar at that time, but it was—

Again, that was the thing. I'm over in New Zealand with all of these people. Like, some of the other kids—their families were coming to visit them there. Like, you know—and staying for a while. And they were doing, like, family vacation stuff, and other—other people on the trip—they were—they were going on excursions every weekend. And I was, like, *I'm not doing anything. Like, I'm, you know, just, like, hanging out with my kiwi boyfriend and his friends, you know, because I can't afford to, you know, hop a flight to South Island or rent a car and go to, you know, Rotorua or, you know, whatever.*

And so—so I didn't get as much out of it, I think, in that sense. But—but for me it was—it was a good experience, definitely. You know, I—I finally got close to some people who I wouldn't have otherwise, because I wouldn't really have crossed paths with them on campus. And—and so—so that was really helpful.

And also just getting the exposure to—you know, yes, it was a different culture because it's a different country and, you know, we were there to study the indigenous people, and that, of course, is a very different culture, but, I mean, the culture that was most meaningfully different to me was an urban culture and if there was a gay community there. And we were in Auckland, which is the biggest city in New Zealand and more or less the only place that there is much of a gay community, or was at the time.

And it was the first time I went to a gay club, and I remember walking in there and just feeling so happy because it felt like I was finally in a place where I would just—I didn't have to worry about acceptance. It felt like a coming home kind of thing. And especially once I quickly made some friends there, it was really like that every- —it was a small, gay community. It's a small country. So everyone went to the same places every Friday and Saturday night. And, you know, I was fresh meat, and so they were very happy to have me. And, you know, it was—it was really nice in that respect.

And it gave me a lot of confidence about being gay that I brought back with me when I returned to Dartmouth. And it was a bit of a turning point in that sense for me, feeling like, you know, I was going to leave Hanover one day, and things were going to be just fine. There was going to be a place. You know, I thought that when I came out, it was, like, Dartmouth was so liberal compared to where I grew up and compared to my family, I was, like, *Well, surely, I'll come out here, and I'll gain acceptance, because these are the messages that people are saying—you know, all these people who work at Dick's House and work for the Office of Residential Life. They're, like, you know, saying, like, you know,—talking about pluralism and all of these things.*

But the students weren't there, you know? And the faculty weren't there, and much of the administration wasn't there, so there was kind of like—there was lip service paid to a lot of it, and there were some people who really believed it, but Dartmouth wasn't inviting in that way. And I was—I was really disappointed. I was, like, *Jesus. Like, I put myself—I've cut off my family now by coming out, and I've got nothing back home. All I have now is my life here in Hanover. And it*

*doesn't seem like they really want me. [Chuckles.] You know, like,—you know, and I was, like, Oh, shit! Like, I guess I'm just gonna be, like, isolated the rest of my life.*

And then going to Auckland and finally connecting to a gay community—it was, like, *No, no. Like, I can go someplace else. Like, I can—I can move back to New Zealand.*

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.]

RULE: *You know, like,—and live here, and, you know, it's like—there is actually a place for me in the world. I just need to get out of these—you know, these sort of small towns, basically. And so that's sort of where—where things went for me. And I think that's why now, like, the idea of going back to Hanover seems like a crazy one, because, you know, I mean, Hanover is a wonderful, beautiful place, and Dartmouth is a great school, but, you know, it's—at least back then, the provinciality, the way that people thought, and even just interacting with people from the Upper [Connecticut River] Valley, you know, that I worked with at DDS—you know, my manager at DDS and these people—it's, like, you know, I would just seem like a freak to them, you know?*

And so—and certainly, you know, my—the two guys from town that I dated had that experience. You know, they weren't happy to be there. And so—so, yeah.

FISHBEIN: Yeah. Wow.

So it sounds like after you left—you—sorry. During your time at—at Dartmouth, you know, you said that your family was pretty conservative—you know, maybe not just in terms of, you know, issues around sex but also, you know, other sorts of political issues,—

RULE: Yeah.

FISHBEIN: —and, you know, did you find yourself, like, becoming more liberal in, like, other ways, other than your sexual identity while you were at Dartmouth?

RULE: Oh, absolutely, yeah. I—you know, it—it's—yeah. It's funny, because—so all the populism that you see, you know, the



[Donald J.] Trump stuff now—like, my dad and his friends—they were saying that, you know, thirty years ago, like. And the only thing that surprised me about Donald Trump winning the election was that I didn't realize there were so many people who thought the same way that they did.

And so, you know, I think coming to Dartmouth and just getting exposed to sort of a more educated way of thinking about things—even just scientific inquiry, interrogating your beliefs—like, thinking that, you know, *Okay, so if demons exist, like, how exactly does that work? You know, like, what's going on there?*

FISHBEIN: [Chuckles.]

RULE: *There has to be some sort of, you know, physical corollary that—you know, through which they're having this effect.* And so just all of that—it really changed the way that I was—was thinking about things. And so, yeah, I mean, I—I don't know. I mean, definitely ideas about—I'm just trying to think of some of the—the views I held before hand, you know, around sexuality, around just I guess the way that—that things happen. You know, I definitely became much more liberal.

And the Quakers are extremely liberal, and they were very influential on the way that I was thinking about things. I became very anti-war. I became a pacifist, you know. And it was interesting: My Arabic professor was from Baghdad, and, you know, this was, you know,—this was even before—this was—I was taking Arabic during the U.S. sanctions against Iraq, before 9/11 [the 9/11/01 attacks], before, you know, the war or anything like that. And, you know, just sort of even those views—you know, ideas about, you know, the Arab world and things like that, that really changed as I learned more just about sort of society and equality and, you know, race.

Oh, man! Like, you know, my country where I grew up—like, I mean, it's not officially segregated anymore, but it's still segregated. Like, there was one black kid in my high school, because it was historically the “white high school” in the county. That's where all the white people lived, and the black people lived on the other side of the county. And it was just,

like, those entrenched ideas about, you know, what's expected of a woman, you know, that her place is at home, raising children, and ideas about sort of, you know, racial equality.

You know, it's—yeah, it's really—all of that changed a lot. Not that I—I would never say that I was—that I was a racist, but—but definitely, you know, there were just these ideas that, you know, you just grow up with the people of different races are just—they're just inferior, you know?

My town actually—it was funny: In 2005, my husband and I were having breakfast one day, and he was reading *The New York Times*, and he was, like,—“There's an article here about this standoff with these Nazis in Florida, this Nazi compound.” And I was, like, “Oh, where is it?” And it was a mile away from my house,—

FISHBEIN: [Laughs.]

RULE: —where I grew up. And I was, like, “That's not a compound.” I was, like,—I knew exactly what he was talking about. “Oh, no, no, that's, like,—I know that house. It's just, like, they have this swastika up on the flagpole, and they would fly the flag. But it's, like, it's just a single-wide, you know, trailer, and that's not a compound, like, you know. And they were heavily fortified. They had the twelve-hour standoff with the police and, like, helicopters and everything and SWAT [special weapons and tactics] teams.

And they actually—what had happened was that they had—they had killed a gay kid, who I guess lived in the neighborhood, and anyway, his mother called the police and all of this, and anyway, then they had this big, you know, standoff.

But my town had a huge—has one of the biggest neo-Nazi communities in the U.S., and so you can just imagine, just surrounded by—by those ideas. It was just part of the culture. It's just sort of tacit. You just expect that, yeah, you know, some people are better than others.

And, you know, the funny thing is, you know, we were among the poorer people, and so we were considered, you

know, white trash, which itself is a racist term, and—but it was just, like, yeah, *so the rich people are better than I am, but we're still better than the black people and the migrant workers. We're definitely better than them, too. And so even though we're poor, in many cases poor is in the black people and poor is in, you know, these, you know, Central American migrants. Like, at least, you know,—at least we're white. At least we have that, you know?*

And that was sort of the attitude in my family, I think, to some extent. And I think confronting that and realizing that that was not a reality in the rest of the world—I think for me, a lot of what opened my mind at Dartmouth—it provided me with the education of understanding that there are all these crazy ideas that I grew up with that were not—they—they weren't ideas that existed elsewhere in the world [Chuckles.] And just sort of knowing that alone was extremely liberating. And so, I definitely—my—you know, my ideals changed a lot.

FISHBEIN:

Do you think being gay also helped open up your mind a little bit? I mean, I listened to, you know, President [George W.] Bush's speeches, and he had, you know, kind of very conservative, you know, sexual views that—

RULE:

I think it definitely made me confront them, right? I had—I had to challenge ideas I had about myself and about sexuality, right? Like, I was—I was so scared when I started realizing I was gay. I was, like, *Oh, my God! Like, I'm this horrible thing now, you know? I'm, like, this thing that I used to think was—that I still think at that time is really bad and really wrong.* I was, like, *What's wrong with me?*—you know?

Like,—and—yeah, I mean, it's so funny. I mean, now I—you know, I'd die to have George W. Bush as our president. [Both chuckle.] Compared to what we have. But at the time, I absolutely hated him. I was, like, *He's this horrible, homophobic warmonger.* You know, like, *What an evil man.* Like, despised him, you know?

And so, you know, it was—it was a tough—it was a tough time in that—in that respect. And of course, you know, my—my family—you know, they were totally, you know, always voting Republican. And usually on those social issues, things like that, like, you know,—like, homophobic legislation. They

were, like, “Yeah, you know, we have to vote for, you know,—for Bush because he’s anti-gay. You know, that’s the right thing to do.”

You know, even my family for a time, like,—and we lived in Florida, and we didn’t have the money to—so it didn’t matter too much anyway, but, like, they were—they wouldn’t consider even going to Disney World because Disney was willing to hire gay people. And so there was—my church and other churches had a boycott on Disney. And so just sort of overcoming even those ideas, that that was a reasonable and okay thing to think about gay people, about black people, about Hispanic people and Latinos—it was just breaking free of all of that, you know?

FISHBEIN: What was the name of the town that you grew up in? I know I should have asked you that earlier.

RULE: Yeah. Hudson. Just like Henry Hudson and the Hudson River. Hudson, Florida.

FISHBEIN: Okay.

RULE: [unintelligible].

FISHBEIN: Yeah, that sounds really great. Like, you had a really, you know, transformational time at Dartmouth, I think, the way you put it in the memo, you know, is that it was really dark, but then it kind of had this, you know, brighter light at the end.

RULE: Hmm.

FISHBEIN: And I found that story pretty inspirational.

RULE: Great, thanks.

FISHBEIN: So I guess—I guess I want to spend, like, some time talking with you. I did this morning. I read some about what you do as a researcher, and I think that maybe it can help us, you know, get at some of the, you know, ideas around, like, your sexuality and, like, other sexu- —other people’s sexuality that, you know, you’ve kind of been thinking about, you know, for a long time. So if you can say, like, just a little bit

about, like, what position you have at the University of Toronto, what sort of research you do.

RULE: Yeah.

FISHBEIN: Then we can maybe get into that a little more.

RULE: Yeah. So—so I'm a social psychologist, and so, you know, social psychology basically is the study of how, you know, people relate to each other socially. I specialize in non-verbal behavior, which mostly ends up being a lot of face perception, because the face has forty-six muscles in it, and we actually move our faces more than we move anything else. They're just small movements, so people don't necessarily think of them as non-verbal as much.

And so—so I got interested—so when I—when I was growing up, I was—I—I realized that it was a very dangerous environment. I was, like, *I need to, like, just stay safe*. And it was, like,—so there was—our town's biggest crack house was right across the street from my parents, and I was, like, *Man, there are all these, like, gangsters coming in all the time, 24/7 drugs, prostitution, everything going on, you know, just a few feet from our front door*.

And I was, like, you know, to navigate this environment, you know. I got beaten up, you know, numerous times, growing up and things, because I was—I was different, you know. And it was, like, *I need to—to learn what—who's safe and who's not* and things like that. And sort of attending to those messages is really what got me interested in psychology and linguistics, which is why I double majored at Dartmouth. I was, like, *I want to understand the way that people sort of communicate things that they don't know that they're communicating*.

And so that's how I got into it. And then once I realized that I was gay, it was, like, *Well, gosh, I've been doing this myself. I've been communicating—I've been expressing my sexuality without realizing it*. And how was that even happening? How do people know that someone is gay versus not?

And so I started, you know, getting really into—trying to understand that. I had a really hard time getting someone to advise my—my thesis. Congratulations on turning in yours last week, by the way.

FISHBEIN: Oh, thank you.

RULE: I remember the pain of that. No one wanted to supervise my thesis. There was a lot of homophobia in the psych department, a *lot* of homophobia in the psych department. I was told by multiple people that if I wanted to study sexual orientation, that I needed to wait until I had tenure and that if I was out, I wasn't going to have a career. And, you know, these are my Dartmouth professors telling me this. And so, you know,—but I—I didn't listen to them. [Chuckles.]

And so I—I was really interested in studying gaydar for my thesis, and it's right there. Somewhere in Rauner there's a copy of my thesis. And I was looking at, you know, facial cues to sexual orientation, and I managed to find someone eventually who was willing to supervise my thesis. He gave me a chance. And I went ahead and did it.

And then, you know, when I went to grad school, I went to work with someone who had published probably, like, one of the only papers at that time on gaydar. And I went to work for her, and, you know, I learned a lot and just kept, sort of, you know, churning out papers and just taking the idea and really getting—breaking it apart as best as I could.

And, you know, it's funny: I—I had all these sort of, you know, you could say right-wing reactions to the work, which is that it's not real science and, you know, it's, like, you know, all these things. You know, it wasn't respected, because it was about gay people. And then on the left wing, people would call me a fascist [chuckles] for studying, you know—studying gaydar, essentially, like, detecting if someone is gay or straight.

And I was, like, *Well, I don't really see how that lines up with fascism, but I understand, you know, their idea.* And so—so I just started looking at, you know, how people can accurately and inaccurately judge sexuality and other things too. And that's sort of where—what my career has been about: like,

what it is that you can tell about someone when you first look at them, you know, within—within a second, without knowing it.

Sometimes you know it; sometimes you don't. The things that people are good at, the things that people are bad at. So, for example, we're actually surprisingly good at telling whether someone is gay or straight. We're surprisingly bad at telling whether someone is lying. [Chuckles.] So we're terrible at judging trustworthiness. We think we're really good at detecting lies, and we're really bad—we think we're bad at telling whether someone's gay, and we're actually quite good.

And so—so, yeah, it sort of, you know, has spun off from there to me sort of looking at a lot of different sort of subtle things that people reveal in their behavior and in their appearance. And that's sort of what's made my career. I—I did very well in graduate school. I—I published a lot of papers, and it was rare, even then, but I got a faculty position right out of graduate school without having to do a post-doctoral fellowship.

FISHBEIN: Wow.

RULE: And it was—at the time, it was during the recession, and so there weren't a lot of jobs in the U.S., and Canada's economy was doing really well, and so they had this job here, which was essentially the equivalent of an endowed chair position, and I—my colleagues here—I knew a guy who worked here, and he was, like, "Oh,"—he's, like, "You—don't even bother applying for that job. You're not gonna get it. You know, they're looking—that's, like,—that's a Canada research chair. Like, they're not gonna hire some grad student."

And nevertheless, I got the job. And so I was, like, *Well, this is a great opportunity. It's a really, you know, prestigious position at a well-funded institution*, and so I took the job here. And then I—that was in 2010. In 2015 I got tenure, and then as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, I'll now be a full professor here. Last year, I was—it was the chair of the department, just for a year while the regular chair was on sabbatical. But—but, yeah, I've—I've really kind of thrived here, actually.

You know, I'm—I'm getting promoted to full professor early, which is, you know, a sign—and, you know, my career has gone really well, even though I was told, you know, not to study sexual orientation I think because I was willing—I was still willing to do it. It really made a place for me in the field and allowed me to sort of have my own identity and—and really prosper, and so, you know, won a variety of—you know, early career awards in various things. I have a lot of—I've been continuously funded. You know, in my time here, I have a lot of grant support, a big lab. I've done—done really well. And I think it's because I—I've done something that I was interested in.

I wasn't afraid to just—again, like I said, you know, numerous times today, like, I figured I would just do what wanted to do until I couldn't do it anymore, until I wasn't—I just hit a wall. And it turns out that the wall the people said I was going to—that I wouldn't be able to climb—you know, I got right over them. And so—just by never giving up.

And things were easy. It wasn't easy to publish work on—on sexual orientation at first. There was a lot of resistance, and—but eventually I broke through, and, you know, fortunately for me, the world has changed a lot in the last ten years, which has made it more possible, but—but, yeah, I don't know whether that answers your question, but that's sort of how I ended up where I am in terms of my career, anyway.

FISHBEIN: Yeah, that's great. Thank you so much. I mean, maybe, you know, once you've gone from the swamps of Hudson, Florida, to being successful at Dartmouth, going from Dartmouth to U of T isn't [chuckles]—isn't, you know, out of the ballpark for you.

RULE: Yeah.

FISHBEIN: So you—you mentioned briefly the homophobia that you faced in the psych- —in the psychology department here.

RULE: Yeah.

FISHBEIN: If you could maybe elaborate on that just a little bit more.



RULE: Yeah. I'll—I'll tell—I'll say two names: Todd [F.] Heatherton, [William M.] "Bill" Kelley. Those should be familiar to you, I would expect. [Chuckles.] [Transcriber's note: Both were professors in Dartmouth's psychology department but retired after there were sexual harassment allegations against them.]

FISHBEIN: Right. Wow. Yeah, no, I'd love to—love to hear more.

RULE: Now that everybody knows [chuckles], I could—I mean, there was this—obviously, the psych department and what was then back then in particular a very sick department. By "sick" by which I mean unhealthy. Like, it was a terrible place for, you know, sexual harassment. And, you know, obviously homophobia was no exception to that.

And so, yeah, no one wanted to touch my thesis, you know, with a ten-foot pole, and even being, like,—I was, like, the only gay person, you know, in—in psych that anyone knew about, you know, who was involved. And I was kind of like, you know, the token gay. I remember one time, one of the graduate students asked me—he was, like,—he was, like, so—he was, like, "Why do you think you need a boyfriend?" He's, like, "You can just masturbate in front of a mirror and it's like having sex for you, isn't it?" And I was, like, "Well, no, it's not actually the same thing, now, is it?" [Chuckles.]

And so—but, I mean, just people's ideas—they were so naïve and ignorant about, you know, anything outside of, you know, heterosexuality. And, you know, I remember one time in particular, there was a party at Todd's house because one of his students was, you know, getting her Ph.D. And one of the grad students said to Todd—they were, like, "Oh, Todd, this must be the first time you ever had a gay person in your house." And he just turned beet red. He was embarrassed. And it was just, like,—yeah, it was—it was interesting.

I mean, I was the butt of many jokes. And, you know, there was definitely a sense that I wasn't being taken seriously because I was this, like,—you know, this gay guy. But—but, yeah, I mean, it wasn't—no one was sexually assaulting me the way that they were my friends, because that was definitely going on. And the stuff that all just came out in the

last couple of years, you know, while you were on campus—Jesus, man, that has been—that has been such a long time coming.

FISHBEIN: That was happening when you were—

RULE: Like, [cross-talk] such a long time coming.

FISHBEIN: —at Dartmouth, right?

RULE: Oh, yeah. And me, as an undergraduate there, at department colloquia, seeing the faculty getting drunk and sexually harass and sexually assault women—like, this was all going on for decades before anything happened. And the grad students—they went to the faculty. They went to the dean of the faculty at the time and complained, and it was just swept under the rug because psych was making the university a lot of money and bringing a lot of prestige at the time.

And so it was all just made to go away. And it was very much—you know, it was funny: It was really an old boys' culture, and—in psych—and it was—it was very similar to what was going on on Webster Avenue [in Hanover, New Hampshire] in the way that it felt in psychology.

And for me, being a linguistics major as well, I got to see that it wasn't all that way, so it wasn't just that Dartmouth was that way; psych in particular was like that. And, you know, it's—it was more—you know, I can't just say it was only, you know, Dartmouth psychology; it was somewhat pervasive as well.

So in two thousand—in 2009, actually, the big social psychology conference was in Tampa, the only time it's ever been there. And I remember being at the conference. This was, like, my last year of grad school. Two of the—two people—you know, one a very senior person the field, giving a talk, and then another time, at the graduate student mentor lunch, my graduate student—my mentor, who was, like, a faculty member, you know, leading this discussion about, like, you know, life in academia—both that person and this person that I saw speaking referred to the people of Tampa as “white trash.” And I was, like,—it just was like a punch in

the gut. I was crushed, because I was, like, you know,— these are the people that they're talking about. The,—who live in Tampa are “the rich people.”

Like, those of you who call *me* white trash—like, I can only imagine what they'd think about *me*. Like, here I am—like, you know, I went to Dartmouth now, and I can speak without a southern accent. Like, I—I don't look poor. I don't sound poor. You know, any of these things anymore. And so I'm passing well enough they feel comfortable, you know, saying these things.

And then when I left the conference center that day and I was walking back to the hotel, there was a parade going on at Tampa, in Tampa that day. There's a pirate parade every year. And all these people from the parade that had been called “white trash” by my—you know, these people that I looked up to, these heroes of mine in psychology—you know, who'd called these people “white trash”—I go outside and I'm walking back to the hotel, and now these drunk parade goes from back home—they're yelling “faggot” at me. And I was, like, *I just can't win!* [Laughs.] It was, like, *I don't belong anywhere, you know?*

So—but even then, you know, I would say, you know, outside of Dartmouth psychology, there was still this sense, you know, of, you know, a lot of—a lot of classism, a lot of homophobia. You know, I definitely—you know, people would feel uncomfortable—I think even now, even now when I go to conferences, there are people who are put off by my being gay.

You know, I'm—I mean, I study non-verbal behavior. Like, I'm sensitive to—to these—to reading these cues. If anything, I give people more benefit of the doubt than a lot of other people would. But I know that I make people uncomfortable at times when I, you know, mention my husband or, you know, anything like that.

People want to be more liberal than they actually are these days. And it makes them really uncomfortable. And, you know, I think in that sense, I got a taste of that much earlier at—at Dartmouth, but a lot of it is still there.

FISHBEIN: Right. It sounds like, given your kind of, you know, personal experience as, you know, both somebody, you know, from Hudson, Florida, and also a gay person, you're maybe kind of predisposed to see through some of these, you know, liberal facades. I might not be using this term correctly, but maybe, like,—

RULE: Yeah.

FISHBEIN: —more attuned to, like, micro-aggressions.

RULE: Absolutely. Definitely. Yeah. And, I mean, you know, it still comes up every day, you know, to some extent, you know, here and there. I mean, I don't really think about it anymore, which is fantastic. It's such a privilege to live in a place like Toronto, where I don't have to worry about—I mean, I think I've been called “faggot” here once in ten years, you know? And so it's, like,—yeah, it's—it's fine.

In New Zealand it was different. New Zealand was not great for that at the time, when I was there on the FSP. Like, we got—my boyfriend and I got harassed, you know, a fair bit. But—but, yeah, you know, it's—but it's still all there. People—people are uneasy with it, you know. Even if they—they don't want be and certainly don't want people to know that they are, you can still read it sometimes.

FISHBEIN: Were there any other places where you experienced sexual harassment or other, you know, forms of sexual assault while you were at Dartmouth?

RULE: Hmm. Well, I mean, you know, not—well, my first—my first boyfriend my sophomore summer—yeah, he—he was—he had issues. [Chuckles.] And so—I mean, he certainly did things that were—I would say were a little bit abusive. He had a lot of internalized homophobia that caused him to act out in certain ways and do things that were, you know, not appropriate.

And I think for him in particular it was very uncomfortable. Even though he—we were, like, openly, you know, an item, he was, I think, very uncomfortable with it a lot of the time around certain people he didn't want—he didn't want people to know he was gay a lot of the time, but he—you know,

also, like, you know, we were boyfriends, you know? And so he didn't know how to reconcile that, and I think that that, you know, led to some—some inappropriate behavior on his part.

And definitely, you know, I think—you know, I knew I wasn't welcome in—in the frats and things like that. I—I didn't put myself in those situations very often. But when I was there, it was, like, you know,—it was just understood that, you know, guys couldn't dance with each other, you know, outside of, you know, Tabard, basically. Maybe one party a year, you know, the disco parties. That was, like,—that was kind of it, you know?

You could—if you wanted to push it in other places, you could, but, you know, people were probably going to say something. People did say things. While I was there, you know, there was—you know, there were—there were the incidents of homophobia where, you know,—I don't even know if these frats are still around, even. But, you know, there was a thing at AD [Alpha Delta] one time, I remember, and one at Psi U [Psi Upsilon]. And, you know, where people were yelling, you know, “Faggot!” from their porch to, you know, people walking by and things like that. There was all of that.

And—but for me personally, like, I actually—you know, I mean, I—I did a pretty good job—I wasn't one of the—as I said, I wasn't that flamboyant, you know. I mean, I consider myself obviously gay, but then again, I'm also the guy who has told the world that you can automatically detect whether someone's gay without even knowing it, so I have a different awareness of it than most people.

But I would say among the people who I hadn't told at Dartmouth, like, I passed for straight just fine. Yeah. It was funny one time: There was another guy in the Quaker group, and he—he was very, very gay. And he—he liked me and everything, and, you know, he knew I was gay. And I remember telling our adviser from—you know, who was, like, one of the regular Quakers, who wasn't part of the Dartmouth community—I remember telling her that I was—it's, like, “Oh, you know, things have gotten awkward with this guy because, you know, he really likes me, and, you

know, confessed his, like, love for me, and, you know, I don't feel that way."

And she's, like, "I'm just so confused." She's, like, "Why would he—he, you know, say that to you?" She's, like, "When you're just so obviously heterosexual!" And I was, like, "Well, no, actually, I'm not. I'm not." [Chuckles.] And so, you know, she was, like,—she, like, hadn't conceived of it, you know? And it was just sort of funny.

And so—so yeah, yeah. It was—it was easy enough for me to keep my head down and just sort of pass through, more or less, among people who hadn't heard, and so that made it a little bit easier for me to not be the one who was getting called these names, whereas this other guy, this other Quaker kid—he was getting it all the time. He was like a lightning rod for it, as well as other people. And, you know, it was very difficult for him.

There was another person in—in that group, a woman, who's actually a trustee right now, and she too, you know, I think, you know, was struggling with it a little bit more. More than I was, certainly. And so—it's funny: There were only four of us in the Quaker student group, and three of us were gay. [Chuckles.] And so—and so, yeah, it's interesting, but—

FISHBEIN: So I—I'm a little bit confused because you said that, like, with your research people can just, like, recognize by, like, looking at each other what their sexual orientation is.

RULE: Mmm.

FISHBEIN: But at the same time, you're saying that you could, like, pass, and these people, like, wouldn't know what your sexual orientation was by looking at you.

RULE: Yeah. Well, that's just it. I mean, people can tell better than they think they can, but the problem—the thing is that people don't know that they can tell. Like, they can tell—they can tell, like, inside. Like, they make the association, but they don't necessarily acknowledge it. Like, people always knew that I wasn't—I wasn't, like, normal, right? There was always something different about me, but they wouldn't have necessarily put their finger on saying that—I wasn't

ostentatiously gay, right? And so you can tell, but at the same time, you don't necessarily consciously recognize that you can tell. That's what it comes down to.

Like, if you ask someone—if you were to show someone a picture of me and say, “Is this guy gay or straight?” people are going to say that I'm gay, you know, sixty-five percent of the time. And yet, at the same time, if you don't prompt someone to think about it—although my data suggests they still recognize that I'm gay. They aren't necessarily going to have it as front of mind, as opposed to, say, someone who is, like, really, really, you know, essentially, like, gender non-conforming.

Like, if you have a super feminine guy, like this other guy in the Quaker group, then it's different, you know, because they're going to be, like, “Oh, yeah, well, he's, like, obviously gay.” And there were—and there were, I think, there were guys at Dartmouth who were so feminine, so feminine. Never came out the whole time. And, of course, they're out now. But they were just, like,—and it was kind of like the emperor's new clothes, you know? It was like, you know, they're pretending like they're straight; everyone is just sort of going along with it, and if you get someone drunk enough, they'll—they'll tell you what they really think. But it's impolite to say that someone is gay, right? So we're just going to go ahead and pretend like, you know, everyone is, you know, straight until, you know, proven otherwise.

But the reality is that people can tell. They can tell whether you're gay. They can tell whether you're rich or poor. The rich and poor stuff is actually even more interesting than the gay stuff, frankly. But—in—from a scientific perspective. And they can tell all kinds of things about you. But they don't necessarily—they aren't actively thinking about it all the time.

But what's most important is even though they're not actively thinking about it, we can still see that it has consequences for the way that they behave. So, for example, I can ask—I can show people a whole bunch of pictures and say, “You know, these are—these are people who are graduating from the engineering school next year. How likely do you think it is that they'll get a job, you know, working at a firm?”

And when I do this, what people do is go ahead and they just say, “Okay, yeah, I think he’ll get a job.” “I think he won’t”—you know, whatever. When I do it, half the faces are gay; half the faces are straight. I don’t tell people this. It’s not necessarily all that obvious, because they’re not thinking about sexuality. But they still are going to be much—significantly more likely to say that the straight guys will get jobs, successful jobs as engineers than the gay guys—

FISHBEIN: Wow.

RULE: —because the gay guys don’t look like they should be engineers. We did the same thing with—with doctors, whether or not you wanted someone to be your child’s teacher, and so it’s, like, there are all these things there, where people have these biases that affect their behavior. And so in the doctor one, we basically asked people, “How much would you want this person—these are a bunch of med students that are graduating. How much would you want this person to be, you know, the physician for you or a loved one?” And they will choose the straight people over the gay people.

And so—so it’s—it’s really interesting. That these have effect even though people don’t realize it. And so—so for me, I know that when people see me, they know I’m gay, and they’re going to treat me differently, even if they don’t know that they’re doing it. And that’s kind of a haunting thing. And it scares me because when I go—especially when I go into a place like where I grew up, like, I know they’re processing this information and that they’re going to—usually it’s going to just manifest as a feeling that they don’t like me for some reason, and they might become aggressive towards me. And so I have to be really careful because they may not even know, and they’ll find a reason to not like me, and that’s just it.

It’s the same way that we, you know, sort of exclude people for a variety of reasons, you know? We go for people that we—that give us positive intuitive feelings, and that’s the way it manifests, just as an intuition.

FISHBEIN: But doesn’t it work the other way around? Like, if I, like, saw a bunch of people, you know, like,—and just saw photos of



them and they're, like, "Who do you want to be your doctor?", like, I wouldn't want to base, like, who my doctor is just off, like, a photo of doctors.

RULE: Mmm.

FISHBEIN: I'd want to, like, see what their credentials are, whether they've, like, done that procedure before—

RULE: Mm-hm.

FISHBEIN: —and then, like, if, you know, maybe I was a little bit, like, inclined to treat, like, the gay person differently, if that gay person was, like, the specialist in the procedure that I needed, I would be, like, "Hands down, I'm choosing this person."

RULE: Yeah. So when we provide people in our studies with more information, we give them credentials and give them all that, at the end of the day they go with what they see, not what with what they know.

FISHBEIN: Wow.

RULE: They still go based on the picture. Yeah. Take the same profile, you know,—you know, the same credentials and just swap the picture out with a gay person and with a straight person—again, these aren't obvious, you know, pictures. Like, these are people—it's subtle. And they still think the straight guy is more qualified.

FISHBEIN: And it's just based off, like, small, like, facial muscle differences?

RULE: Exactly. Yeah.

FISHBEIN: That—that's crazy.

RULE: It *is* crazy. [Both chuckle.] It's really crazy. I mean, it's—I mean, it's—it's really fun for me to discover this. But at the same time, I'm, like, *Wow, this is really—this is disturbing, too. It's scary*, you know? And people just don't realize, you know? And it's, like, you know, all these things about employment nondiscrimination and "don't ask, don't tell"—

what a crock of shit! Like, you know, I was just, like, you know, all these things—you hear these various, you know, congressmen saying, like, “Oh, we don’t need laws to protect, you know, employment discrimination for gay people because you have to—it’s your fault if you come out and you tell someone you’re gay.”

And it’s, like, “No, no, no, there’s a lot more to it than that. It’s all subtle stuff,” you know. It’s just—it’s very similar to gender discrimination or race discrimination.

FISHBEIN: Mm-hm.

RULE: So—

FISHBEIN: Well, yeah, I guess I would just think that, like, race or gender discrimination, it would be like—I don’t know, a little bit more obvious. Like, if I’m, like, applying for, like, a lawyer job—

RULE: Yeah.

FISHBEIN: —I think people will, like, see, like, “Fishbein” on my résumé and then, like, be more inclined to, you know, treat the Jewish name. [Chuckles.]

RULE: Yeah,—

FISHBEIN: But, like, just by looking at me.

RULE: And that’s just it. So with—with something subtle, like, you know, you know, being Jewish, being gay, there’s plausible deniability that allows people to say, “Oh, of course, it’s—I didn’t—I didn’t hire him because—I didn’t not hire him because he’s gay. Like, I didn’t even *know* he was gay. You can’t tell that he’s gay,” like. And—but deep down, they did know, and it did have an influence [chuckles], you know, whereas if you say that with—with gender, it’s, like, “Okay, yeah, you—obviously you can’t deny that you knew she was a woman, right?—you know. And so that’s where things get [cross-talk] different and get really sort of hairy.

FISHBEIN: Or that you knew somebody was, yeah, black or something.

RULE: Exactly. Yeah.

FISHBEIN: So do you kind of see yourself as, like, a—I know I was reading through your profile on the University of Toronto earlier today, and it said that—the word “justice” came up a lot in what you had written about. Do you kind of see yourself as, like, an advocate through this work? Do you kind of see it having political implications?

RULE: Yeah. And definitely—I mean, the justice stuff in particular comes up in other work we’ve done, looking at, like, racial biases, too, you know? And so people—you know, in other work I’ve done, you know, we’ve found that people are—are much more likely to—to sentence someone to death over life in prison for committing the same crime if they’re black, if they look untrustworthy—you know, things of that nature. And so they’re much more likely to—to—to shoot someone if they, you know,—if they have, like, a black-looking body, because they think that they’re stronger and more threatening. It’s, like, all of the sort of things around that.

But, yeah, no, definitely part of the work is—is social justice oriented. It’s the application of what we’re finding, you know, with the idea that it’s bettering society. You know, there’s this idea, you know, tax dollars are funding this stuff, even if they’re Canadian tax dollars, and so we have to pay back. And that’s—you know, we have an obligation, a responsibility to take the knowledge that we’re learning and find ways to make society better with it.

And that is a big part of it. And I guess in a way, that sort of, you know, even goes back to those early days, you know, when I decided after coming out that I wasn’t going to lie about it and I was going to—I was going to let people, you know, know that I was the gay UGA. And, you know, a lot of, you know, people would come and talk to me about coming out, you know, and—you know, I hope I helped them. I don’t know. Maybe I just, you know, gave them bad advice.

But I’ll say honestly, you know, the reason I heard about this SpeakOut was this guy who—he was an ’05 when I was, you know, a UGA. He lived on the floor below me. He was gay, and he’s the one who told me about it. You know, I sort of—you know, I was there for him. I was the gay person he knew

and helped him come out, and so—so I think in way, I'm trying to take my own sort of experiences and let people benefit from them so we can make a more reasonable and just world.

And even that's part of the Quaker philosophy as well—you know, that we really should be—you know, it's kind of like—what was nice about the Quakers is, like, they were kind of like, "Shut the fuck up and do something." [Both chuckle.] Which compared to, you know, what I was growing up with, it was, like, all like fire, brimstone and hate. And I was, like, "How can—how can—why are you saying that God is love when how you talk about it is how he's going to torture me for eternity, you know, for, you know, doing something silly, you know?"

And—and so it was, like,—it seemed like the real deal. And I think, you know, it's still a big part of what keeps me going. I wanted—so, I mean, just to be very, you know, direct about it, my life has been very difficult. [Chuckles.] You know, especially growing up. It was—it was—it was really hard.

And if someone—if—I want my life to eventually, by the time I die, do something that makes up for that, to make it worth it. For all of the sort of—all the pain that I went through—you know, the hunger, the—you know, the rejection, the cruelty, you know, that I faced, especially growing up and then even, you know, at times since then. I wanted that to be justified in some way by thinking, *Well, it was all worth it because I—I did something good in the end.* And I think that really is a big part of what—what has driven me, kept me going, because otherwise, it was all for nothing, you know?

And so—so yeah. And I think, you know, especially these days and the political climate, not even in the U.S. but across the world, you know, things seem so regressive right now. It's very discouraging. I mean, hopefully the tide is turning a little bit, but we have to keep pushing forward, you know. I think it's a matter of frankly saving the world, to some extent so that there *is* still a world out there in the next hundred years, so— maybe that's a little pie in the sky, but nevertheless—

FISHBEIN: No, wow.

RULE: —it keeps me going, so—

FISHBEIN: Yeah. Thank you for—for sharing. You've given me a lot to think about.

I want to—are you still identifying as a Quaker? Are you still involved with them since your time at Dartmouth?

RULE: Yeah, no, it's awful. I haven't gone to a Quaker meeting in a very, very long time. In part, when I was in graduate school, I was—I was working so much, when I'd go I would just fall asleep. [Both chuckle.] And so I was embarrassed. I thought going—you know, now I think it's—it's some of the stuff—I'm—I'm pretty much an atheist, right? But I don't really know. I mean, but, yeah, I haven't gone to Quaker meeting since I moved to Toronto, at least, and even for years before that. But—so, yeah, I sort of fell out of it a bit.

And, you know, the—there is some, you know,—well, some of it's a little bit mystical. You know, it seems a little silly now, now that I've become so much more of a scientist, but—but yeah.

FISHBEIN: And it does—it does seem like you found a much more, I don't know, enriching environment first at, you know, Tufts [University], when you were in grad school in Boston and then later, you know, at the University of Toronto in Toronto, where you can maybe, you know, express more of your full self than you could here in Hanover.

RULE: Yeah, definitely, definitely.

FISHBEIN: Yeah, so it's kind of been that, you know,—yeah, that's pretty—pretty inspiring to hear, you know, your kind of journey from, you know, some place that wasn't so great for you to someplace where, you know, you feel more authentic and feel like you can, you know, even be there for other people as well.

RULE: Yeah, no. I mean, like, my life is so wonderful now. It's, like, I'm married to the man of my dreams, who's a doctor, you know? [Laughs.] I have this—I have a great job. You know, it's, like, I'm—I have all the food I want. That's a big thing in

our house. Like, we always have lots of food. And when I go to the store now, like, I don't even—you know, I don't have to think about the price. I am still, like, ridiculously frugal, but, like, I don't have to worry about it, you know? I eat in the best restaurants in the world, you know, on occasion. And, you know, it's—it's really—it's wonderful.

So I have—I have such a rich life. And I'm—I think I'm—maybe I'm able to appreciate it more than a lot of people would, but I've just been so lucky. I've been so lucky.

FISHBEIN: How do you feel now with your—with your family? I mean, you've talked about the, you know, drastic state of Trump, and you said that they were, you know, really in that group of people who, you know, we associate with voting for him.

RULE: Yeah.

FISHBEIN: Are—are you kind of, you know, at odds with them now? Have you—what's your involvement with your parents and your four siblings?

RULE: Yeah. So my parents are both dead. They died pretty young. I mean, poor people—they die young, so they died pretty early. And so both of my parents are dead. And then I have my siblings. I—I don't speak to my sister. She's the oldest. And my brothers—I call them on their birthday. They don't—they don't call me on mine, but nevertheless [chuckles] I at least, you know. So, you know, I speak to them once a year, and—and that's—that's—you know, that's pretty much it. But we really don't—our lives are so different, you know?

FISHBEIN: Mm-hm.

RULE: You know, it's, like, I don't even—I don't even know if they have passports, you know? And so—and so, yeah, like I said, when I came out, that was kind of the end of things, really. Like, I never fit in even before that, but then after that, it was, like,—especially with, you know, the explicit rejection of saying, you know, “We don't trust to have you around our children.” You know, that was—I think that summed it up, you know? Yeah.

- FISHBEIN: So your advocacy and justice work is maybe a little bit more inclined to, you know, the kind of the gay identity that you come from than, you know, attached to the roots where you grew up.
- RULE: It's funny, you know: In a way, the gay stuff has been a lot easier because it came later, whereas the—the class-based stuff has been much more difficult for me to come to terms with, because it—it was so much deeper. And only recently have I started to sort of do more with that. I actually have a lot of passion for that, you know. I'd like to be more involved with, you know, first-generation students and things like that, which isn't as much a thing in Canada as it is in the U.S., because all the universities in Canada are public. The social network is—the social net is so different, you know, that you don't see the—you don't have poverty in Canada the way that you do in the U.S. And so—so it's a little bit of a different beast. But—but yeah.
- FISHBEIN: Well, I mean, you must from time to time encounter people in your lab or in your classrooms who, you know, maybe you can empathize with, right?
- RULE: Definitely, yeah. And in, you know, social psychology it feels more broadly. It's, you know, something that I have been doing a little more advocacy with, actually, you know, at the big conference that we have every year. And this past year, I spoke about, you know, imposture syndrome—you know, the idea that, you know, you're sort of not as—you're not as qualified as people think you are, and sort of that sense and sort of how my own experiences, you know,—you know, coming from the background that I—I did, sort of—you know, sort of led to that and the way that it relates and so on, so I do do a bit of that as well, but—
- FISHBEIN: Do—do you still feel like an imposter?
- RULE: Oh, of course! [Laughs.] Yeah, no, definitely. Yeah, definitely. Yeah, deep down, I'm—I'm just that—that “white trash” kid from the swamp, you know. But they—they let me live among them up here, and so [chuckles]—up in the ivory tower, and so I'm just—still, like I said, enjoying it while I—while it lasts, but—

FISHBEIN: Wow. “Enjoy it while it lasts.” All right. That seems sort of like a, I don’t know, mental—mental idea, moral ideology, you know, personal philosophy of yours.

RULE: It does seem to be, yeah.

FISHBEIN: Well, all right, it’s two o’clock, and I told you that we would go until now. I personally have way too many things on my plate, even after finishing my thesis.

RULE: Yeah. I understand.

FISHBEIN: But I really thank you so much for speaking with me today. It’s been really interesting for me to hear, you know, not just about your experience as, you know, a gay person here at Dartmouth but, you know, your experience of class, the work that you do now, you know, wish I could—I’m a history major. I wish I had, like, a little bit better of a grasp on social science that I could, like, check out some of your work without being too inundated with, like, p-values [probability values] and other things that I don’t fully understand.  
[Laughs.]

RULE: Yeah. Yeah.

FISHBEIN: But, no, yeah, thank you so much for speaking with me.

[End of interview.]