‘They’ve never been taught what feminism is’: the case for teaching feminism, gender issues, and related topics in school.

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Interview transcript between Laura Stocker (researcher) and Kylie (high school teacher in British Columbia, Canada) as part of research data collected for dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MSc Gender, Sexuality & Society at Birkbeck, University of London, September 30, 2020.

*Interview conducted online via synchronous connection using video technology. To note: there were many connection and therefore sound quality challenges during this interview.*

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Introduction

Laura: ok so my first question, so kind of from the premise um knowing that you um teach philosophy 12 at a high school um and that you um have tried to incorporate uh feminism in to your teaching um from what I understand, um I was looking in the philosophy curriculum online and it looks like feminist philosophy is um a sample topic but it’s not necessarily like a mandatory or a mandated one, is that correct, my my understanding?

Kylie: ya, that’s definitely correct, it’s um an option for the teacher but it’s not something that we have to choose

L: ok, and then so from that –

K: um just going to grab my philosophy textbook

L: sure sure

K: ok

L: um so from that, I’m just wondering if you could um explain why you decided to incorporate it in your class

K: um, I decided to incorporate it actually because when I first went over epistemology, different ways of knowing, I provided um feminism, I always provide feminism as a [inaudible] so we have like rationalism and empiricism um the two main ones that come from Western Philosophy, and then [pause] it is a Western Philosophy course, but I also would say we can know things through indigenous knowledge or um through Taoism, like the ancient Chinese philosophy, or um with a feminist lens. So it really comes under the subheading of, or the unit of epistemology, which is like foundational um sub-discipline of philosophy

L: ok and sorry you just cut a little bit in the beginning so sorry if it’s repeated [laughter] I’m sorry it’s not such a great connection um bit I was just wondering uh like why was it important for you to include feminism

K: right, so what I do, I give my students the the list of the potential ways of thinking about knowledge, and then when they um, lots of them ask for more, so they ask for more of a certain one, or so maybe if there is an indigenous student in the class [inaudible] epistemology um and then I thought most of my classes are made up of young, white men, boys [laughter] it they the women in the philosophy classes, the girls who take philosophy, it’s usu-- I would say 15 boys to 2-3 girls um but when I bring up feminism as a choice for epistemology, they usually, the women, the girls express a lot of interest in wanting to know more and then I go more in to it. A little bit with the whole class and a little bit with them, um bit it’s because they express an interest in it.

L: ok, so that comes from um the students, then in kind of a participatory or organic uh way

K: yeah

L: ok. Um and then if you could just briefly um just to get a sense of what you kind of cover when when talking about feminism um can you just kind of give a brief overview?

K: sure. So [pause] I’m just going to go to that part [referring to textbook]. Um so okay. I go-- I look at two things when looking at feminism. One is [inaudible] and the other one is under feminist ethics

L: sorry the first one just cut out, could you repeat that one?

K: yeah so the first one is in terms of uh epistemology, so feminist ways of knowing and the second one is um under in the sub-discipline of ethics so, how ethics changes when you take um a feminist understanding of ethics. So just give me a second [pause, flipping through book]. Sorry I should have had these ready

L: that’s ok, take your time

K: ok there it is. Ok so um very briefly, I introduce them like I said to different ways of knowing and the idea that there may be different truths. So we look at the fact that contemporary philosophers dismiss the concept of an absolute truth that the earlier philosophers though they could get to this this truth and that feminist philosophy is built on this belief, so it kind of shakes the core of Western philosophy in that there is only one truth and we’re only seeking this one universal truth, and that’s what most of the male philosophers of Greek and Roman times were trying to get at, and feminism kind of turns this on its head, um. So basically the early philosophers they did invite women in [inaudible] but their voice in philosophy was often overlooked. Like for example Emmanuel Kant, I tell the students, he didn’t believe that women were-- had rational minds. A lot of foundations of Western Philosophy actually didn’t give women access to philosophy because they were non-rational. And so a lot of students don’t accept that, like especially the male students, they don’t, they don’t believe that it was ever like that. So it’s hard for them to accept that. Um and then we look a little bit at Mary Wollstonecraft um who is challenging this thinking. So she is challenging the fact that philosophy is inherently biased and is outdated, um, and she argues essentially that girls are not naturally wanting to wear pink dresses [inaudible] and like take care of everything. That’s not natural but that’s nurtured um and we’re nurtured into these highly gendered roles. So we look at how how that type of gendered knowledge and prejudice is built in to our knowledge system and then how that plays out into society’s values. So society essentially values um masculine forms of knowledge so it’s-- masculine forms of knowledge are always valorized over women’s forms of knowledge or women’s voices and that’s a hard pill and some-- lots of the boys in my class completely reject that idea. They reject the idea that this is true. Um but we do see like that feminists are now arguing that women’s voices have managed to break through and that um we are challenging the idea based on the idea that knowledge is constructed so feminism uses this idea that knowledge is constructed um and it’s not just some essential universal truth that you know only certain philosophers can access. Um therefore I tell my students like you know philosophy is important because it impacts how we view epistemology has impacted our life today like our histories as a country, in the [inaudible] schools, the fact that like I have a gendered experience as a teacher, lots of times I’m treated very differently because of my gender um and I try to get them to connect to something in their life that resonates with the truth that that um feminist knowledge has been hidden in our society, or that women’s voices have been hidden

L: mmm okay you’ve already kind of started--

K: it’s huge abstract thinking for them at 18, but then I’ll just ask them some more questions, like do you think knowledge is constructed, or in your own life have you ever seen um like were you put in to a gendered category like being, do you have if, if you’re a boy were you given like [inaudible] like you know, try to connect to their own experience and see if it resonates

L: sorry uh just as a boy if they were given what sorry did you say?

K: if they were gendered, so if they were given blue toys or I dunno given dump trucks or stuff like that

L: and have you uh um heard some of their reflections, what have they said in response?

K: I don’t know I can’t remember about that [laughter]

L: [laughter] um you’ve already touched on it a little but if I could just get you to expand on what your experience has been teaching this

K: yeah so I did introduce like feminist feminist ethics as well, um Carol Gilligan’s work on ethics of care. So as caring-- caring is a value which um is a moral value so that we can [pause] we can care for others and it doesn’t mean that um that that’s the only option that women have. And so what’s been interesting in terms of the ethics of care is that I see a lot of boys in my class um relate to the ethics of care. So while they might reject that western civilization is anti-women’s or-- women’s oppression, they might reject the idea that knowledge is constructed, they will, they do see in themselves um they can view themselves as caring [inaudible]

L: oh sorry, you just cut out. They do see themselves as what? Or they can see themselves as what?

K: they can see themselves as caregivers. They can see themselves as-- they can see ethics as something that makes sense to them, like interconnecting with other people’s needs and care and preventing them from harm, they can see themselves um adopting that type of ethics, maybe over like a more like male perspective of utilitarianism so I like that they can, they could adopt an ethics of care like without being-- feeling de-masculinized or something, yeah

L: mhm and have you thought about or why would you say that maybe there’s kind of this one thing that they can accept or can kind of wrap their heads around and one thing that they can’t, kind of having to do with the construction of knowledge and, why would you say that there’s a difference in their reaction

K: I definitely think that Canada, like the nation, has done a really really good job at teaching our students and people in general this very conservative idea that we do have equality, like we do we are a multicultural society and we are an equal society. So this is like true of all of my teaching in uh with young people, is when I ask them about Canada, on the whole, they think that we are very loving, peace-- peaceful, non-racists, um high equality between the sexes, um not a lot of racism, and like I mean these the kids are normally, there are some kids of colour but mostly this is you know my experience I’ve had at {university} and here at {high school}, is there’s this very deep sort of reproduction of the government’s-- I think they got it in elementary school but this really push in the in the early 2000s around Canada is a multicultural society, we’re a quilt, we’re a mosaic, we’re welcoming, we welcome refugees, um, you know, our police come in to our schools [inaudible] it’s always a pushing away of like – it’s coming out now more in like 2018 with the fact that the missing and murdered indigenous girls and like some police brutality, but I think for the main part, the messaging always comes from government we are not the United States, we do have equality between the sexes, we do have cultural we do have um this ideology called multiculturalism that allows [inaudible] and I think that just that message has just been [inaudible] by the young people in Canada

L: sorry just that last part cut out, that message has really

K: yeah, I think it’s been adopted by the young white children in Canada. Because it allows us not to have to [inaudible] well if we don’t have a minority experience, then that’s a really great message to say ‘ya, my country is equal, my country is multicultural’ and it does build pride.

L: mm mhm

K: and I do see them being proud, proud of Canada

L: mmm

K: and these are I mean you don’t think of it often, but these are government-run public schools, they are feeding a message to the kids

L: totally [laughter]

K: [laughter] so I think that they’re getting that message, yeah

L: mm ok and so this is kind of maybe the first time in their class that they’re sort of confronting something that they’re not really familiar with or haven’t really encountered anywhere else?

K: yeah it’s like pushing, it pushes back on the mainstream’s ideology of Canada, and a lot of people when they want to go with the flow [inaudible] it’s really [inaudible] to push back against this really quaint, nice idea

L: hm sorry you just cut out, you said it’s hard to push back

K: it’s hard um I think it’s hard for them to hear me push back or be critical of this really nice quaint idea that they’ve that they have bought in to. It’s uh yeah so, it’s unsettling

L: mmm

K: but it’s often more unsettling when it’s coming from a person [inaudible] uh pushing back in the community so it’s like the school is a safe, experimental place for them to hear- in my opinion- for them to hear that your experience of Canada might not be everyone’s experience of Canada. Or your experience of knowledge it um it might not-- it might be a privileged experience, one that valorizes male knowledge over female knowledge, like, it might be really hard for them to hear but it’s coming like it’s still coming, they’re still in a very normal place of high school, you know, so it’s not, it might be radical but the environment is not radical

L: mm. Um would you say that there’s other topics that you’re teaching in this class where they’re kind of reacting in the same way, or would you say that it’s kind of maybe the only one that you’re seeing resistance to

K: um that’s a good question. [pause] there’s definitely resistance to all identity politics. So resistance to race, gender, and the um LGBTQ movement. I do see resistance to many forms of identity

L: mm in terms of not being able to relate or not having thought about it before?

K: yeah and also like I think also feeling like inundated feeling like well what can I do, this is not my fault. Yeah I do think like there is a bit of inundation, like I said like since like well since 2010 I think there has been a bit of inundation [inaudible] like constantly in the news and stuff

L: oh sorry, an inundation of what

K: um identity politics I think is dominating the news cycle a lot and I think they’re getting that like a lot in well I wouldn’t say like social media but generally in [Y inaudible] there’s constant talk about LGBTQ and like there’s constant talk now in their schools like they have to take residential schools and they take it multiple times and so there is this huge push to like teach them from the side of the minority, but they’re almost getting inundating by it and then they’re like ‘no, I’m done’

L: mm ok. Um do you see kind of um at the end of the class or at the end of kind of teaching about feminist philosophy and then kind of letting that sit, do you notice perspectives changing, or not really being taken on board?

K: I do, I notice like their ability to like question is so enhanced. Their ability to like think critically is really-- changes. Um I think in terms of feminism, I think they’re grateful that they’ve learned something about it. They’re grateful, they usually feel gratitude that they learned that it’s not just about, that feminists aren’t just black-wearing, men-hating um dykes who are just coming for men, I really do think they enjoy like the deeper understanding of epistemology as related to feminism um, ethics as related to feminism, so it kind of de-politicizes feminism and I do see them appreciating that, they feel like they’ve walked away with a deeper understanding, rather than just having a really negative conn-- like idea of second-wave feminism as like bra-burning and like men-hating, which is normally like what they think. So when people say like ‘everyone should be a feminist’, they’re like ‘fuck that’ you know that like they can’t they could never like no no one in the class would ever say that, right, because they’ve never been taught what feminism is. And most-- I would say most of the pre-conceived notions coming in to my class about feminism, both on the male and the female, side are this really radical second-wave feminism that came out in the 60s that was like yeah just like really hating on men, was like a men-hating ideology.

L: mm

K: yeah they really-- even when I say the word feminism, they all like giggle and laugh, like it’s so funny [laughter]

L: [laughter] um do you have any thoughts on where they’re getting these pre-conceived notions from

K: um I would just say like from family

L: from family?

K: I think so. Like even if I didn’t do my master’s degree in social sciences, I’m pretty sure like I don’t know why but I would have held on to that like idea that feminism was more man-hating, yeah, I don’t know that’s kind of just the messaging that I-- although I can’t really like pin-point where I got that from

L: mm. I mean I think it was a very strategic and targeted [laughter] strategy by the dominant uh the dominant group to kind of um yeah just have that--

K: it’s so true, it’s so true

L: yeah, but I’m sort of surprised, like I would say at my age uh at their age-- when I was their age, I’m not sure I was aware at all about what feminism was, but like not even enough to have any kind of image of it, even as man-hating, so I’m surprised that many years later than when I was in high school they kind of have this stronger negative connotation of it, it’s interesting

K: yeah, because they’re more information kids, they grew up with the internet. Like they’ve had phones-- most of them have had phones, so they’re yeah they’re plugged in to those ideas like way earlier than we were, so and like a lot of the well what pops up like if you don’t have a critical or educated understanding than the mainstream wants you to know about feminism about [inaudible] and LGBTQ, about any of these identity politics things

L: mm

K: yeah they’re definitely in a different place than we were. Like yeah same with me, feminism was not a thing for me in high school

L: yeah. Um I have two follow up questions. The first, I’m wondering if you notice a difference in reaction, and I know you said that there are quite few female students already but if you notice a difference in reaction between the female students um and the male students um in learning about feminist philosophy

K: yeah with the female students there’s this like ‘ahhhh’ like sigh of relief, like ‘I knew it’. You can see this like ‘oooh’, this lightbulb go off and this curiosity get sparked, whereas with the men, with the boy students, it’s a more mixed reaction and it’s a lot more muted. But with the girls, it’s like ‘oh yeah, yeah I get it’ and then some girls too will say like a kind of like a light bulb goes off but they’ll say but in Canada we’re super equal, but in Canada, in {city}, in BC, you know, I don’t see it [shrug] so they sometimes qualify it with like ‘yeah I get that, but you know not here’ or [Y inaudible]

L: mm okay. Um do you have any maybe like memorable conversations um that come to mind kind of like students, do you have a like a class discussion about it, do you have any memorable conversations where the students are maybe talking to each other about it, or anything questions that they’ve asked you

K: um, I just remember one student, she was-- she’s a black girl from uh London actually and she was in Canadian context and um she said like in England she had never heard of feminism and then she actually took it home to her mom, told her mom about what she had learned in the class, and then her and her mom did like a full inquiry in to feminism and feminism for black women together at home and I think that might of shifted the course of her life, um like it’s yeah it’s weird to say this but teachers to have impact and I do think that was a moment for her, I can see she’s going to take that into the rest of her life, that awareness and that that desire to learn more. Like she might even take more philosophy or more feminist courses as she entered university if she didn’t have that experience so yeah that was something that stuck with me around this feminist issue

L: mm

K: yeah

L: I don’t think that’s weird to say at all, I don’t think teachers are given enough credit of how much they can impact I think [laughter] I think it’s really important

K: yeah

L: and uh I was wondering kind of would you say the majority in the class maybe like philosophy is an elective, um would you say that the majority would be taking like science in other classes or more history, or what kind of composition would you say or is it quite a mix

K: I think there’s a mix. I think most of the kids that are taking philosophy are usually going down the science [inaudible] university

L: sorry usually going down the science

K: they’re going to be in science like the sciences because they’re they’re doing it because they’re going to university. I would say a majority take it because they they are going to go into higher education. But there are other students that are just personality-wise they feel like philosophy fits. Yeah, so it’s more personal than academic

L: ok

K: and then we get kids from like shop class which I love

L: oh hm

K: kids like really blue collar kids that are in shop or woodwork or metalwork and they show up in philosophy um and also like a lot of like Christian, like people who identify as Christian, um which I don’t get I don’t know if it’s because we don’t talk about religion [inaudible] but um definitely people who outwardly identify as Christian and their really curious about religion and philosophy

L: mm ok. That’s neat, I don’t remember philosophy being offered when I was in high school

K: yeah this is totally new in the last two years

L: ok. Oh wow. Um I had a a question, so basically when I was in high school there was um a slogan from the Ministry of Advanced Education um that said ‘choose science, go far’ [laughter]

K: mmm!

L: so sort of like pushing I would say or you know um championing--

K: it still is, it’s still pushing STEM--

L: so I was wondering if it’s the same or not

K: It’s a hundred percent, I think it’s like more [inaudible] STEM, like I don’t even know what STEM stands for – science, technology, engineering and machines, I don’t know

L: math?

K: math, math. No, it’s like if you’re going to be anybody or anything, you’re going to go in to STEM. And but then when I do when I ask my students like do you think it was valuable to take a philosophy course, do you think all people and they say yeah I think it should be mandatory. They all say this course has changed my life forever, or like they all say, like I can send you their quotes that they give me after

L: oh that would be great if you don’t mind

K: yeah I can send I’ll send you, like this is from last year’s class and the class before and it’s just it’s like um yeah it’s like unbelievable what they what they get out of it.

L: mm oh really neat

K: yeah but they’re definitely pushed away from, they know that it’s not like a future. Like they always say like well you lucked out [laughter] like you took social sciences and like it just happened that there became a philosophy class you know and I’m like oh I know [laughter] you know, otherwise I’d be working at the coffee shop [laughter]

L: [laughter]

K: yup

L: um I’m wondering, and you kind of mentioned it already but just wondering kind of if not in your class um, where else might they be learning about feminism in school. Um like would you say-- I had a brief look in the curriculum and it is mentioned but again as sample topics um so I’m just wondering how much would you say that they would be learning, and I know that you don’t teach a history class or social studies so just whatever you might kind of have an idea of

K: um there might they might be introduced to Joan of Arc in grade 8 as a feminist sort of icon. They should be. I don’t know if they are. And then um [pause] phew I don’t like they might be introduced to it in upper level English but it’s not it’s only the specific [Y inaudible]. The only place I’m thinking maybe law and maybe psychology which are the two like psychology 12 or law 12 [inaudible] and now there’s also um social justice 12. Again it’s probably a selected topic that you could look at. But other than that like those elective classes in grade 12, it would be very few and far between

L: m ok and earlier like mandatory in grade 10 or

K: grade 10 is all about Canadian geography and in terms of history and grade 9 is all about [inaudible] now. So so unless teachers are like

L: sorry grade 9 is all

K: like World War I and World War II

L: ok

K: so that is highly masculinized curriculum. Unless the teacher is taking like an explicit-- which they’re not, I know they’re not. So no

L: mm ok. Um I’m just going to look back at my set of questions [laughter]. Um um [pause] and I’m just wondering, I guess maybe hard to quantify but I guess like what percentage of let’s say grade 12s would go through the philosophy class, like is it quite a small, like how big would your class be

K: um like in the two sessions, it would be like two classes, um [pause] I don’t know. I could get back to you on that one

L: ok cool. Just kind of wanted to get a sense of yeah the percentage that might go through the class

K: right, I’d have to find out what the grad class is, I don’t know

L: ok. Really doesn’t have to be um exact, just a sense of like 10% or 50% um so don’t don’t do any calculations

K: I would say it’s under 10 percent for sure

L: oh ok

K: or perhaps even under 5%, it’s super low

L: ok ok ok

K: yeah

L: um and then I was curious about-- just if you could give me some background information, I found it hard to find out about the curriculum um, was it revised recently, the grade 12 curriculum

K: um we got this new textbook, it so it was published in 2011

L: m ok

K: and I don’t-- because it’s such a new course like I think this is what it is

L: mm

K: yeah yeah so it started in 2011. And the textbook that does come with this course is called Philosophy Thinkers, Theories and Questions and it’s published by um McGraw-Hill Ryerson so if you want you could like directly at the textbook just to get like a you can see you can see you know feminism is a tiny percentage of the philosophy curriculum, it’s just like I said it’s a a pocket, there’s a tiny pocket of it in epistemology, like formal logic, logic and reasoning there’s nothing, um metaphysics, there’s nothing, it’s all the male philosophers. Um philosophy of science, there might be like a coup-- one or two women perspectives on science [inaudible] Fox Keller um and then social and political philosophy it’s very driven by like male-- the canon is male.

L: mm ok

K: so as a teacher like if you want to teach them about Western philosophy you can’t be teaching them about feminism because it’s not what Western philosophy is. So then feminism becomes a selected course, right, then if you’re really interested then you take a course in feminist philosophy, like um yeah it’s it’s it’s interesting these niche like how inside of oppression even within institutions, the voices that are speaking back to oppression also become like a niche or like a marginalized voice within the larger canon that remains quite stable.

L: mm mm

K: so if you could run like a parallel process like coursework but that doesn’t mean that it’s like it’s um unearthing or like getting rid of the main canon of Western philosophy, like it’s still very much there, like it’s this monolithic like I feel it still, there’s not a lot of shift in like maybe like in different in different social sciences right now but not in philosophy. Philosophy is quite conservative

L: mm ok

K: because it’s written like the ancient [inaudible]

L: sorry the ancient

K: the ancient Greek and roman Culture, so it starts with Plato, Aristotle, that’s like the birthplace of it, the “fathers” of modern philosophy like they’re not gonna go away like this is the foundation of this inquiry is is based on them

L: m ok

K: yeah

L: I wanted to loop back actually to something you said earlier, kind of about how um uh sort of a positive image of Canada is arguably kind of included in kind of the school system, um this sense of multiculturalism, but given um with like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission um as you said also the police brutality is coming a little bit more to the forefront with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women. How much would you say that the kind of positive image of Canada is starting to shift in terms of how it’s being put forward to students or is there kind of a disconnect in the way things are taught, or or what would you say

K: I think it is starting to shift um like they’re bringing in more Elders, especially into the elementary schools, more Aboriginal EAs. They are bringing in more language, like indigenous language classes um but in terms of like how they’re doing with like structural racism in school, structural oppression of gender within the schools, it still feels like very like boutique changes like well now instead of the poster on my wall saying you know science is the thing, now the poster is like indigenous knowledge is important, or like um you know it’s a feather, but like fundamentally has there been a deep critical shift in the psyches of teachers – no. Teachers are very conservative. High school teachers are very conservative. They they um they’re there because they like children, they [inaudible] high school teachers what I’m realizing more and more, they’re not um like shapers of culture. They’re not critical thinkers even. They’re not, they don’t come to this job to shake things up. They-- the status quo has worked for them, they’re embedded in it um the mainstream has worked for people who live and work in these institutions and so um they’re very much wedded to the idea of reproducing what they had because that was what worked for them. And there are a minority of teachers who are like ‘I want to change the world’ [inaudible] but you can even see those teachers very like very quickly in their career like radically um adopting-- you have to in a way, like, just making sure that they fit in to those structures, the rigid structures of the institution so they can remain um and they’re sort of like radical like change the world dreams, they extinguish very very quickly [laughter] uh when they realize the nature of the job. So I think I do have radical intentions always but I do-- it’s not-- it’s more because I’m older going in to school, like a lot of teachers come in when they’re like 23, you know, I went in to teaching when I was {older than that} so I already have some sense of like the conservative values that exist but also continuing to like plant small seeds of like critical thinking [inaudible] thinking and like you know trying to nudge people towards more critical ways of thinking but it’s very, sometimes it feels completely ineffectual like sometimes I just feel like why am I – I don’t fit in to the with the other teachers. But I know there’s a lot of kids in our schools that feel like they don’t [inaudible] because the mainstream’s not working

L: sorry what’s that?

K: I also know there’s a lot of students that feel they don’t fit in so they can kind of seek me. Because I know that they feel that they don’t-- that the mainstream’s not working for them so we still need teachers like me to be there um because there’s still kids there that feel that the mainstream is not working for them

L: mm

K: yeah

L: mm ok. Um I’ll just switched gears a little bit, I just wanted to talk about MeToo um briefly

K: ok

L: I was wondering, so the MeToo movement um broke out kind of on a wide scale in um 2017 on social media. I was wondering if that trickled in to schools at all, do you remember

K: not that I saw

L: no and like I was curious if like {high school} kind of maybe had some kind of policy to talk about it or any kind of like yeah any sort of um maybe mention about issues around sexual harassment or or was it totally not not a thing

K: it was totally not a thing, I’m sad to say. It seems like, it seems like teachers are already so overworked, they can’t jump on to progressive social movements as they’re happening. And also it comes down to the district. So if the district doesn’t force us to incorporate a MeToo movement thing or um, the teachers won’t do it. It’s because they’re conservative, they have conservative values and they’re overworked. Um so unless we have like, there are social um like different clubs so they might take it up, but they didn’t, not in our school. Not for this issue.

L: ok. And you didn’t have any instances of any any kid bringing it up in a class or asking you about it or anything like that

K: no, no. I will say that for the Black Lives Matter and the new protests that are happening, one student that did come in, she talked about it with me for like a good solid four hours and that was on her radar because of Tik Tok. {information redacted to protect location}

L: sorry that cut out a bit sorry

K: the the protests in the United States [inaudible] through their Tik Tok accounts. Like even my daughter like have you you know she’s updating me more than I know, so that’s obviously coming through their feed

L: ok ok. Um but the district hasn’t come out with anything on on the Black Lives Matter movement or anything in the past few weeks um either, like with MeToo?

K: no no

L: no. And for both MeToo and Black Lives Matter, would you want that to be different or or do you think that it’s maybe appropriate that they’re not

K: well one of the things that’s happening is the we just the district just started moving on [inaudible]

L: sorry what’s that

K: the district just started moving in the last like six months on climate change issues. So we were really, it was a huge push, activist push from grassroots, with the city and with um all the like the farms and a lot of local people put on the agenda like dealing with this now and like the climate crisis and we had delegations presenting at council and um in the community we were raising awareness so in the last like three years like me personally and a group have been pushing this climate change agenda to get the district to adopt and their bureaucracy works so slowly. It’s only in the last literally three months have they put out any statement on climate change and like we things with climate change have been, I mean we’ve been talking about climate change since the 70s, like they have not reacted to it for all of these years, and so it’s like this radical moment that they actually put out something on sustainability uh and so I don’t know if that overwhelms them or if that’s all that’s like they pivot-- they’re this huge ship and like made this pivot which is impossible for them to like use the word sustainability and it was so hard and it took all this time and then for them to pivot to like MeToo and then pivot to Black Lives Matter, like it’s just like it I don’t, they’re not like a sailboat, they can’t, they’re not flexible, the institution is like this huge freighter than cannot turn, it’s going only one direction and I always use this metaphor and like if it needs to move it can’t, like it literally there’s nobody inside on the whole deck who can make it turn in in in time. And so that’s why we keep talking about the institutions being unearthed, because it’s like uh there’s shit going on inside because the boat’s not turning [inaudible] like there’s a million obstacles and it’s packed and it has no flexibility, it has no like it can’t turn quickly enough so inside people are like infighting and things are crumbling and no one knows what to do and it’s like-- that’s, that’s what it feels like right now

L: I find that really interesting at like the district level like you would think that that might be typical of federal level or provincial level but that the kind of smaller jurisdictions might be able to manoeuver more dynamically but it it sounds like the opposite [laughter]

K: it’s completely the opposite, I don’t know, I think partially it’s district—{school district} has always had trouble. {Information redacted to protect location} so it’s also just who’s on the Board again, like we have a very conservative, status quo, {city} like the cultural context of {city} is very different [inaudible] you know, they’re just not ready to move on these things, it’s definitely more more [inaudible] more like yeah and that definitely drives the policy we have here

L: mm ok. Well that’s basically it from me um it’s been really interesting [laughter]

K: I’ve been talking, I feel like I’ve been talking so much

L: no that’s super yeah it’s been really great. I guess just before we close I’m just wondering if you had any last comments maybe on on your experience teaching uh feminism um feminist philosophy in your class or anything to circle back to or

K: yeah I think I just like from this interview and your project I am going to make sure that it is like not-- that it always gets talked about at least, that it always gets put on the table as [inaudible] both in ethics and in epistemology because when these um like as things are changing and when these issues pop up like Black Lives Matter or if there is another MeToo movement if we have or If Trump does something else um or you know something comes out about Trudeau or our leaders it’s like my students are like ‘oh yeah I remember you know in epistemology that a lot of our ideas are framed from the male perspective’, or like ‘I remember that a lot of our [inaudible] utilitarianism like the greatest happiness for the greatest number, they’re not about an ethics of care, so just giving them that like deeper insight in to like this philosophy has so, feminism out of all of the philosophies have more of an impact [inaudible] like on our actual lived experience whether we’re men or women [inaudible] or you know any of the LGBTQ community, it really really shapes like what life looks like, like just on a day-to-day level yeah

L: yeah, thank you [laughter]

K: so yeah, I’m just gonna yeah make sure that this doesn’t get yeah slipped through the cracks

L: mm

K: because it’s hard when there’s so much to teach and so much going on. I even I can adopt these more conservative, status quo like just stick with the curriculum, stick with what I know, like there’s so many even now we’re like these online teachers like you know it’s just like this never ending uh certainty, unpredictability, unprecedented um but we’ll have to just yeah stick our guns, definitely, it’s a good reminder.

L: great well thank you so much [laughter] I really appreciate it

K: yeah [laughter]. I don’t envy you having to put this all down in a paper

L: oh haha yeah I’ve definitely got my work cut out for me but I’m excited about it

Concluding remarks

Kylie is a pseudonym

Redactions indicated in {} to protect participant’s anonymity