**Episode 56 – Notes from The Road, Part 1**

**Written and hosted by Lisa Dawn Hamilton**

Welcome to Do We Know Things? A podcast where we examine things we think we know about sex.

Content warning: This podcast will include discussions of sexual topics.

Hi everyone! I am Dr. Lisa Dawn Hamilton, professor of psychology and sex educator. Today on Do We Know Things, my adventures on the road.

**Intro**

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Hi everyone! I am Dr. Lisa Dawn Hamilton, professor of psychology and sex educator. Today on Do We Know Things, notes from the road!

I am back! (Sort of). After a much-longer-than-planned hiatus, I am very excited to be releasing a new Do We Know Things episode. Usually on Do We Know Things, I do deep dives into research myself or bring on experts to look into things that often misunderstood about sex, but we’re not going to do any of that today. We will in future episodes this season. For this episode, I bring you along on my adventures on the road during a two-month road trip. I will share sex wisdom from a psychologist, explore sexism in psychology at the History of Psychology museum and more. That’s coming up on Do We Know Things?

**Intro**

On October 5th, I left my cozy home in Sackville, NB to spend 2 months driving around the U.S. I drove from New Brunswick to Vancouver in a wild route that took me through the midwest, all the way down to Texas, across to San Diego and up the West Coast. My producer Matt suggested that I record some voice notes of my experiences on the way to share on the podcast.

My goal on this trip was to reconnect with long distance friends. I went to grad school in the U.S., and so many of my friends are scattered all over the country. This trip was inspired by Jami Attenberg’s memoir *I Came All This Way to Meet You.* In it, she talks about going on book tours and staying with friends. I have so many wonderful friends, and the idea of spending quality time with them and their families sounded like exactly what I needed. I also just love being on the road, driving alone. Its my favourite way to think and reflect. I also wanted to go to sex-related events, museums, and archives because there is always more to learn about sex.

The episode is not as polished as the usual DWKT episodes because I recorded much of it as voice notes on my phone, but I hope you enjoy tagging along on my adventures!

**Departure**

It was a sunny day in October when I goodbye to my New Brunswick pals. I posed for pictures with my shiny new Honda Civic, hugged my friends and headed out on the road. My odometer read 1785 kms as I started my journey. "

After a quick sleepover in Portland, ME, my first stop was Boston. Or as we like to call it in NB "Big Halifax." I cruised into Boston, over the bridge, with shockingly reasonable traffic given that it was rush hour to meet for breakfast with a prof from Boston University, Dr. Karen Warkentin. Karen is a biology and Women’s and Gender Studies professor, and, like myself, likes to meld those two worlds. We had an amazing chat about sex, gender, and biology, but I will save the details for a future episode when I can interview Karen directly.

I love the architecture and the old-ness of Boston. I grew up in Vancouver, where everything is so new, so this has led to a fascination for old stone buildings. Although one thing that goes along with old buildings is lack of accessibility and for my needs, bathrooms! I was lucky the place we were having breakfast had a bathroom, but to get there, I had to walk THROUGH THE KITCHEN, right beside all the hashbrowns frying on the griddle, down a long set of stairs into a terrifying basement, where I definitely though I was going to be murdered. But at least there was a bathroom? I have been at restaurants in Boston with no bathroom at all.

I do love the vibe in Boston, though. I love all the trees and water and parks alongside the busy streets. I wandered around after breakfast, just taking in the city-ness of it all.

But isn't it funny how roadtrips to places you visited before often dredge up vivid memories? Here's my first voicenote from the road:

Fenway park in Boston (runs 1:23)

But it wasn't all memories of the past. I also did some work... met people.. and had great chats with old friends long into the night...

Here's my second reflection I had from the road

Boston sex advice (runs 3:13)

There is so much shame around sex that I think is a barrier to talking about it. Especially when you think you are inadequate because of messages you are getting from society or from a partner. Talking to a therapist, sex educator, or even a supportive friend can really help normalize sexual experiences and take away shame.

It was time to leave Boston. I left the suburb where I was staying and headed to Buffalo to meet up with a professor friend who teaches fascinating sociology classes, like one on deviance. I am realizing as I record this now, that I need to have him on the podcast sometime soon! After Buffalo, I headed to Toronto where my first stop was the Body Blitz spa (highly recommend) and then to another sex researcher friend’s place for dinner with his family and a out of town visitors, one of whom is a gender researcher from the Netherlands. I recruited her to be part of my Netherlands course this spring. Then it was on to London, ON for a few days with a friend before beginning the U.S. portion of the road trip in earnest. I stopped at a sugar shack to get some maple syrup to share with my friends in non-maple syrup locations and headed to Akron, OH.

Akron is not what you'd normally put on a roadtrip of "great American cities" (sorry Ohio) but it's actually pretty great. It is an industrial city and the downtown is really lovely. There are great museums, a big, impressive library, and a lot of tributes to tires… Akron is known for being the home of Goodyear tire. I was even startled by the Goodyear blimp when I was there. I saw what I thought was a missile out of the corner of my eye. (Missiles have been on my mind with Palestine under constant attack.) Turns out it was not a deadly missile but instead a delightfully slow moving blimp.

I was in Akron for a specific reason… the National museum for the history of psychology. It is housed in the University of Akron in a nondescript building marked only by a small sign that says Drs. Nicholas and Dorothy Cummings Centre for the History of Psychology. The building houses the National Museum of Psychology, the Archives of the History of American Psychology, and the Institute for Human Science and Culture. I was informed upon arrival the museum it is part of the Smithsonian museums AND that it is the ONLY national museum dedicated to Psychology. Fun fact, the director is Canadian. Unfortunately, she was not in when I was there.

The lovely student who greeted me at the front desk was surprised that I had come all the way from Canada (a mere 5 hour drive away) to go there. Apparently I am in a minority. But why wouldn’t I come! It has all the historical artifacts from the history of my discipline. I am now teaching the History of Psyc class at my university, and I wanted to deepen my knowledge and understand, and frankly, get some cool pictures of old apparatuses (apparati?) to put in my lecture slides. I also knew there was a cool exhibit focused on historical issues of Sexology magazine.

I ended up spending A LOT of time there and ended up recording three voice memos about my experience... first up, I was surprised how much of the museum's permanent collection focused on sexuality and gender. So I recorded at the the NMHP, my first impression of permanent collection?

gender and sexuality clip. Runs 4:46

I actually just found out from a statement on the website, that Dr. Nicholas Cummings, one of the namesakes of the centre is known to have, himself, made public statements promoting changing sexual orientation, what is often known as conversion therapy. This is a really big part of the history of psychology, and it is important that we not sweep it under the rug. I am glad that the museum is owning it on their website. Western psychology and psychiatry were created from the perspectives of white, ostensibly straight men with Ph.D. and MDs in a society steeped in patriarchy and white supremacy. To them, anyone different than their upper class, male, white, straight world was defective and in need of fixing. Women were a key target also.

Institutionalization of women - runs 6:52

Sexology and sensationalism runs 5:17

These are just a few examples of what was on display at the Centre. Access to the museum and the institute for human science and culture was only $10. Akron is less than an hour away from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. (I also went there!) So if you ever find yourself in this region and like nerding out about psychology, I definitely think its worth the drive. I truly don’t know why it is housed at the University of Akron, but I suspect that is where the donors wanted it.

One thing I love about road trips is that they allow you to access things you wouldn’t normally come across when travelling via plane. Usually with planes we fly to major cities or resort destinations. Probably not many people are making Akron their destination. The flexibility of a road trip allowed me to explore these out-of-the-way places. And truly, some of my favourite parts of this trip were random recommendations from locals that I never would have found otherwise. Like at my next stop in Columbus, OH, recommended by a librarian friend. They have a massive independent bookstore called the book loft that is a maze of 32 rooms of books where I spent way too much time and money!

In the next installment: The Kinsey Institute in Bloomington. A queer/kinky convention in Denver, and abortion roads signs in the southwest. And more!

But that will be in a few week’s time. Next episode we're talking about Solos. with professor, author, podcaster, and bachelor Dr. Peter McGraw who I met up with in Denver. He has a great  book coming out and we had a lively conversation.

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