##### [00:00:00.130] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

You are listening to the award winning WHCM 88.3 FM, Palatine, Illinois, a broadcast station of Harper College and its board of trustees. I'm Jeff Julian, and you're listening to Harper Talks, a coproduction of Harper College alumni relations and Harper Radio. Today on Harper Talks. I'm excited to speak with Dr. Christopher Schneider. Dr. Schneider is a graduate of Harper College, a 2021 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient, and a full professor of sociology at Brandon University in Manitoba, Canada. His research and publications have focused largely on information technologies and related changes to police work. His writing, research and commentary have appeared in hundreds of news reports, including The New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, NBC News, Chicago's, WGN TV and CBC's The National. Dr. Schneider is also the co author, along with his wife, Dr. Stacey Hannem, of a new book entitled Defining Sexual Misconduct: Power, Media, and Me Too, which will be published in May 2022 and just celebrated a launch event at Harper College. Chris, welcome to Harper Talks, and thanks for being here.

##### [00:01:09.940] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Hey, thank you for having me.

##### [00:01:11.220] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

Absolutely. It is my pleasure. So when you were at Harper in 2000, did you think someday I'm going to be a Distinguished Alumni, write a fantastic book with my wife, and eventually star on the alumni podcast?

##### [00:01:23.950] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

No, never. So, 25 years ago, I sort of started at Harper. I finished up in 2000. And I came to Harper College in the fall of 1997 after I graduated from Schaumburg High School. And I really didn't have a sense of what I wanted to do other than I wanted to continue to pursue learning, education and kind of was the thing to do. And some of my friends were doing it and I didn't have a lot of direction at the time. And so I came to Harper and I took an introductory to sociology course with Dr. Helmet Publ, who came to the book launch yesterday. I have not seen Dr. Publ in 25 years. And it was awesome. It was so cool to see the man himself who he ignited this passion, this fire in me. I took that sociology course. And funny story, as I shared with him yesterday, I remember when I got into class and a couple of weeks in, I was really excited, really turned on by the material. And I approached him after class. Dr. Publ, is there something else I can read? I've read all the assigned chapters. This is a couple of weeks in the term.

##### [00:02:27.480] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

And he's like, oh, yeah, there's this book called The Four Sociological Traditions by Randall Collins, who is a very well known and esteemed professor in sociology. And I think I was 18. So I went down to Borders Books and Music, which doesn't exist anymore. And I bought the book and I didn't understand a word of it. I was like, what is this? And I was pretty disappointed. Yeah.

##### [00:02:48.420] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

I was going to ask, did that discourage you? Obviously, it didn't because you went on. But in that moment.

##### [00:02:54.450] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Yeah, in the moment, it was incredibly discouraging. But here's the good thing. And with some of the students I've seen on campus who came to the book launch yesterday, excited students, some great students here, when you encounter things like that, they can be accessible. You have to work for it. And I was so excited about sociology, and I thought, you know what? I'm going to learn this. I'm to going figure out how to understand this. I can tell it's written in English. I didn't know what all the words meant or the concepts, and I kept at it. And I've since revisited the text over the years. And now I get it. And I have the same exact book I bought in the fall of 97 or 98 or whatever it was. And I mentioned that to Dr. Publ yesterday. I said I still have the book. And I saved my intro to sociology textbook, which is 25 years old and so out of date. But it has a sentimental value for me because this is where it all started, my career trajectory, and it's been great. So it was great to see him. And I never thought my wildest dreams and a real pinch me moment was Dr. Publ. Not only did he come to listen to me speak and I spent time listening to him speak here. 25 years ago, he bought a book and he asked me to sign it. And it was wild, like, wow, what an out of body experience. I'm signing a book for the man himself who... It was a really cool moment. And he was so kind and so humble. And it was just a beautiful experience. He retired, unfortunately for those students listening, who will not be able to take his classes from Harper College in 2020 after 35 years, I believe, of teaching here. There are other great professors here. Jim Gramlich, for example, who is the chair of the Department of Anthropology and sociology, and he's fantastic. My co author, Stacey and I, you mentioned we were married. She's my wife. We're not technically married, but it's fine. That's fine. Life partner, all that kind of stuff. So we popped into Dr. Grimlich's class on Tuesday, and I had a talk with the students there. And it was fantastic. And he was great. And that class was great. And it was very reminiscent of some of my early experiences at Harper.

##### [00:04:54.150] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

And Stacey and I and my co author, Dr. Hannem. We were chatting after and about how amazing and profound it is and the things the students here don't understand is that class. I think there were eight or nine students there and how small and intimate these classroom spaces are and the kind of exposure and learning students get here. And how could you know? I was here as 18. I didn't think anything of it. And then you start getting into the bigger universities and you transfer out of Harper and you get in these classes and some of them are hundreds of students, and you get lost in the sea of faces. It's like going to a concert or something, and you don't really get to have interactions or access to the prof. or get to know them. And Harper College provides such a unique learning experience for the students here. And I cannot convey that enough for...To really just, I don't know, sit in that now and enjoy it now while it's here. Because when you go on and you get into bigger College classes, you're like, wow, I had it so good and I didn't even know.

##### [00:05:49.770] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

Yeah, well, and think about that connection you have with Dr. Publ. And now to be able to come full circle, be back here. Thank him and sort of revel in that moment of him purchasing your book and signing it after being inspired by a book that he recommended to you. Those are the types of things that happen on this campus. I'm curious if you have now after teaching for a while, if you've had any experiences similar where you feel like, oh, maybe I've inspired that next student to pursue this field.

##### [00:06:25.140] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

We all want to believe that and we all tell ourselves that. But the thing is, one never knows. And I got to tell Dr Publ that yesterday I said, you're the one who inspired. And he said, we all have that person. I said, well, it means a great deal to me to be able to tell you that, because I know what that means. Now on this side of the fence, and periodically you'll get students who email you years later and say, your class really inspired me or this one thing you said this one day, which seems at the time to me inconsequential, like, what? Really? That was the thing. And so you get little bits and pieces of that. And it's those moments that really make it all worth it. Being a College Professor is not something one does for the money necessarily. If you can get a gig, it's a decent paying gig. So I'll say that, but it's a vocation. It's a type of calling. And it's those moments that make it all worth it. And now with email and the Internet, which were just sort of this is how old I am, everybody. When I came here, actually, it was literally on the Harper College campus that I signed up for my first email account, the Yahoo account. They had the computer terminals and computers are really expensive. Then my parents didn't have a lot of money. So this is where I started emailing. But now with Google and the Internet, email, it's so easy to keep in touch after so many years. So you do get emails periodically from students who've had your courses and they do tell you things. And it's really great to have that sort of acknowledgement recognition, which makes this whole thing just really worth it. It's great.

##### [00:07:56.540] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

So you were a first generation College student. Did you experience any challenges? Can you talk about any that you might have faced being the first?

##### [00:08:07.610] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Yeah, lots of challenges. So we have a concept. We've learned what to call this. Now, I lacked the cultural capital, so this is a concept in sociology. And by that, what's meant is if your parents are College educated or medical doctors or lawyers, you sort of pick up some of these things through osmosis growing up, and you get a sense of this is how you apply to College. This is how you get a student loan, these sorts of things. And my father was a high school dropout and he was a long haul truck driver for 23 years. Nothing wrong with that. Good job. Hard working man, very hard job. And then my mother graduated high school and she was a postal worker, postal mail carrier for the United States Post Service for 29 years. So, all right, very cool. Also a very tough job. And my parents were very hard working people, and I got that sort of work ethic from them, which was very helpful coming to Harper College. But I didn't really have any idea of what's a Registrar's Office. How do I get my transcripts officially so I could transfer out of Harper College to another University?

##### [00:09:16.970] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Just the sort of things that you really don't think of. Those are some of the challenges. Scheduling classes, who do I go to see the schedule classes. And now a lot of that, of course, happens online, and students can kind of figure that out. But paying tuition, getting books, getting the syllabi, all the sort of stuff that your parents or your caregivers who, if they were College educated, would provide that, you have a sense of that? I had no sense of that. So it's a steep learning curve for a lot of students who come to Harper College who might not have that experience. All of that said, I remember 25 years ago, and it still rings true today, having been on campus now for the last three days. The staff and the faculty here are phenomenal. They're always available to help out. They respond to emails. Fantastic people working for Harper College. The facilities are amazing. The campus is clean and bright and brilliant. My colleague Stacey and I were chatting. The free parking is huge. We pulled up and we're embarrassed to admit this when we came on Tuesday to do the guest lecture. We drove around the parking lot for a solid 20 minutes trying to find a pay booth because we didn't want to get a ticket.

##### [00:10:22.040] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

And so Stacey hops on the phone, is Googling while I'm driving around circles like an idiot. And she said, the parking is free. And I said, no, it's not. It's not free. And she said, yeah, look, she shows me the phone, I thought, wow, that's huge. And it's huge to students because Harper could be charging in all colleges and universities charge a lot of money. It's a commuter campus. The fact that they're not taking advantage of their students and providing one extra barrier that's going to be a cost barrier to students coming to receive an education is huge. And it's so awesome. And it speaks volumes about the kind of place Harper College is. Man, that was awesome.

##### [00:10:56.480] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

Yeah, that's great to hear you say that. And knowing that you felt the College wrapping their arms around you while you were here as a first generation student, I know oftentimes our students develop a real comfort being at Harper. So what was it like for you when you transferred to Northern Illinois University? Were you ready? Did you feel prepared to be there after your time at Harper? Yeah.

##### [00:11:21.740] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

So I transferred first to Harper, and there's obviously some confusion there to Northeastern Illinois University for my undergraduate degree and then to Northern. And I did feel prepared. You know what? I felt intellectually prepared because when I took all the humanities courses that I was allowed to per the requirements for the associate degree in transferring in, I had a solid understanding of the key concepts and ideas like the sociological imagination and other things. So when I entered in at Northeastern Illinois University as a junior and started taking the junior level courses in sociology and majoring, I felt prepared. I felt intellectually prepared. I had a sense of, again, what the Registrar's office was. I knew where to find transcripts. I knew where the student counselors were. I knew how to consult the map and quickly had the lay of the land for campus. They charge for parking there, I will tell you that. So that's discouraging. But I was well prepared for that after leaving Harper. And I suspect coming here 25 years later, the facilities are even better, and the staff and faculty, as best I can tell, are as good, if not better, than I was here.

##### [00:12:30.020] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

So there's no doubt in my mind that the students who come to Harpor College today will be equally prepared to move on to other universities or other institutions of higher education, having a good sense of developing a type of, again, cultural capital to be able to move on with their lives and their careers.

##### [00:12:46.660] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

So you're writing about some challenging topics, including policing, sexual misconduct, the MeToo movement. What drew you to this subject matter, and what have you learned from your research and writing?

##### [00:12:59.170] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

We don't have enough time in the podcast to answer that question fully and adequately. I will do the best I can. My research and my research interest has been always sort of on media, sort of can refer to any kind of media. Right. So I was interested in music and television, pop culture, and I developed a keen interest and awareness in understanding or seeking to want to learn more about how media influence the ways in which people interact with one another. I'm trained as what we call it a symbolic interactionist. And what that means is that those are sociologists who are interested in the ways in which people make sense of the world, how we dress, how we present ourselves, why we wear a suit and a tie to a funeral or wedding, and we wear Hawaiian shorts out to a party with our friends. And then we sort of change the way we look and all of that. And we do a lot of those things without often very consciously thinking about it, the things we say, how we present ourselves. And increasingly, we've heard this before. We live in a mediated world. Right.

##### [00:14:03.200] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

And it's only become more mediated. And in some of my work, we refer to this as the mediated communication order. This is the way in which most people now are interacting through technologies, texting, Facebook posts, TikTok, videos, these things. And then also there's news reports. Without media, the social world in which we know it could not exist. It's weird and profound to sort of think about that. And my entry into, as it were, the work that I do. I'm really interested to learn more. I'm curious about how media contribute to what we refer to as social control. And social control is defined in many ways by different scholars, but loosely it refers to the ability to define situations so people behave in a particular way. Police are recognized as basic, but what we call agents, formal agents of social control. We behave in particular ways because there's symbolic authority. There's a badge and a gun. There's the law. And a police officer pulls you over, commands you to do something. People listen for a variety of reasons, including the threat of force. And that's sort of a real easy, concrete way of thinking about social control.

##### [00:15:14.210] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

But we go a little bit deeper and we start thinking about media, and we think of things like, some people think Coronavirus is real, some think it's fake, some think vaccines work, some think they don't. Right now, you and I can have a full conversation about what we think about what's going on with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. I'm going to guess you've probably never been to Ukraine or Russia. True. Okay, me either. But we can talk for the next hour about what we think about that. But where do those ideas come from? Obviously, media, but that allows us to define situations. I was talking about social control and the ability to define situations. And who's defining that situation? And how does that contribute to how you and I literally have a conversation right now in this room and how other people all around the world having conversations? And is it right? Is it wrong? What does it mean? And that's sort of been my approach to understanding media influence. Media don't determine how we think. But they have a very powerful influence. And in relation to the book on sexual misconduct that Stacey and I just wrote, my interest in that we learned about #MeToo, through media.

##### [00:16:14.700] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

It was a mediated movement using the hashtag. And even before that, when we hear about the allegations against Weinstein and the comments made by Trump and the Hollywood Access tape and the crude remarks Trump made about grabbing women by the genitalia, we hear about that. And elicit is a powerful response, right? People get really angry or they deny that Trump is just doing locker room talk. And people really had something to say about that. And Stacey and I started having a lot of conversations, as we all did. We all thought when the Hollywood Access tape dropped, oh, that's the end of Trump's aspirations of the presidency, and it didn't. He become the President. And then Weinstein, he's in jail, was in prison. Right. The criminal charges. And how did that happen? How did one person openly brag about sexually assaulting people and another person who also was actually caught in recording a police wire, no less, Weinstein, about groping a woman. Why is one in prison and the other not? It is an interesting sociological question. And Stacey and I mean that question and a lot of people had that question is what? That was the Genesis for the book.

##### [00:17:13.980] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

That's what created the book. And Stacey and I approached that, and it was a true marriage of sorts. To go back to that, Stacy's work is in. She studies sex work. She studies sex crime, sexualized harms. Her whole research and training and background is in that my research, training and background is all in media analysis. And so we started talking about these things. We should write a book, this book. I could not have written this book by myself because I lacked the adequate training on that end. And she couldn't have because she lacked the adequate. And it was a 50 50 collaboration. We started talking about it. And first we did a one off paper on the Trump and Weinstein questions. We were interested in that. And we introduced a concept, sociological concept called stigma, developed by Irving Goffman. He published a book called Stigma in 1963. And that word, which a lot of people know has been sort of hijacked in pop culture, doesn't really mean what people think it means. What Goffman said was stigma is a discrediting attribute. And people who are stigmatized is more about you referred to the language of relationships.

##### [00:18:15.330] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

It's how we sort of talk about stigma and interpret and define these things. And stigmatize people. He mentions the activities and behaviors are not necessarily stigmatizing. What he calls, it's a weird term of phrase, if they confirm the usualness of the person. Okay, so the argument we make in that chapter in the book is Trump had been bragging and boasting about sexual assault and made all types of crude marks about women. He was on the Howard Stern Show in the 90s, and I think Howard Stern and him where they were grading his daughter's sexual attractiveness just to really sort of. And when the allegations in the tape came out with Trump, people surrounding Trump, his colleagues and politicians said, well duh, this is Trump being Trump. How are you actually surprised by this? Whereas Weinstein, his public persona was he donated money to feminist charities. He was an advocate for women and putting women in roles in Hollywood. He championed women, women's rights, advancing women. But then behind closed doors in private, guy was a monster sexual predator, rapist. And when all that came out, it was incongruent with who Weinstein was sort of presenting himself as the argument we take stigma in our book, and we make that case for that's why Weinstein's downfall was so immediate.

##### [00:19:35.550] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

And there were some other factors that we outlined in the book. But I won't bore you too much with that. But that's how that book sort of came out.

##### [00:19:41.180] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

That sounds like a powerful collaboration between you and Stacey and just produced a really interesting work. You also write a lot about social media. And I think wherever we are in the continuum of social media, it's ubiquitous. We've all experienced it. As you said, it mediates a lot of our day to day interactions. What's the lesson that most of us don't know but should about social media?

##### [00:20:07.940] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Wow, that's a really interesting question. I mean, I think something is "Google never forgets" that's something we could apply to all social media is you got to be really important, really mindful of what you're putting out there. And we all kind of know that. But the problem with that is social media is not regulated-ish I think what is it, 14 to have a Facebook profile, and some of the ones might be lower ages. And maybe it should be regulated a little bit more because we all did stupid stuff when we were 14. We said dumb things. I mean, literally, your brains aren't fully formed yet. Cognitive functioning. We look at psychology and medicine. We don't have fully formed brains. Of course you're going to say stupid stuff. And one of the problems, of course, is that the stupid stuff you do at 15 on Twitter comes back to haunt you when you're 25 and it could cost you a job or a career. And that's something thinking about social media. Another thing that maybe people don't know about that we all need to learn more about is the role of algorithms and how they determine how we interact with one another.

##### [00:21:17.010] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

It's really interesting. People seem to think that social media is this kind of free Democratic space. And we all could say whatever we want when we want. And these things are just patently false. First and foremost, these are private companies and people decry my freedom of speech. I can say whatever. No, you can't. Twitter is a private company, just like my house is a private house. If you come over to my house and you say some things I don't like, I ask you to leave because it's my house and it's weird because social media is that it's a social interactive space. And now you're being asked to leave. But what do you mean? People to wrap their heads around that. And speech comes with consequences. You can say whatever you like, but the consequences you might not like.

##### [00:21:59.310] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

Absolutely. And you sort of brought up the idea of digital literacy. Media literacy. Is that something that you've brought into your classroom more to talk to your students about, especially as they're doing their research. Right. That you've really got to be careful about the sources, the materials you cite and having that understanding that some of the information that's being presented to you served to you on whatever platform you've got a question.

##### [00:22:28.250] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Yeah. It's been increasingly difficult to discuss and teach critical thinking. The interesting thing with critical thinking and critical digital literacy is everybody thinks they're a critical thinker. But when pressed to define critical thinking, very few can. They get all mad. Oh, I think critically. It means. I think critically. What does that mean? We all know you can't use the word in the definition when you're defining it. So I would define and there are different versions of this, but I define critical thinking is the ability to judge the validity of statements that are presented for consideration. So that's an interesting way of approaching all digital literacy. So what makes a statement valid? Where does that come from? Why do we agree on some information and disagree on information? And you start unpacking things like reality that we experience, experiential reality or the agreement reality. So, for example, you and I right now probably would both agree that it's cold on Mars. Now I'm willing to bet my next paycheck that you've never been to Mars, and probably no one else listening to this has been to Mars either.

##### [00:23:26.540] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

You're absolutely correct. At least in my case, I can't speak to anybody else. But yes.

##### [00:23:31.830] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Right. But we all agree on that. And where does that come from? Well, and you start to tease this out with students. You bring this up and. Well, eventually they get to, well, NASA and science and they send Rovers there and they send back information. And we agree that that all. So that's sort of agreed upon reality. And when we question the validity of those statements, what makes those statements valid? Okay, well, these are people with credentials and they've gone to universities and they have lots of degrees and they studied these things. And then you start taking other types of information. We just hear about misinformation, disinformation. Okay. So your aunt on Facebook said that the war in Ukraine is fake news. Okay. What makes that statement valid? And very quickly, that sort of falls apart. I don't know. Why would she lie? What do you mean why would she lie? And it becomes difficult to defend nonsense when you can't. So I really like that, questioning the validity of statements presented for consideration. But then we start to dig deeper down the rabbit hole and what is a valid statement and what is legitimate evidence.

##### [00:24:39.150] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

And we hear a lot and people out there are probably confused, as I am, one day it's okay to drink ten glasses of wine. It's healthy for you and you won't ever get cancer. The next day drinking wine causes cancer. What is happening? Every day it's some nonsense. Eat a bar of chocolate a day. Don't eat an Apple because it keeps the doctor. And one of the things take that digital literacy and questioning statements and you start to look into those scientific projects. And in the end, the sample size twelve people and nine out of the twelve people reported whatever. And that's how they get. And what all that means is you cannot generalize research findings within a sample size of nine, which is not a thing. So then we start talking about what is the sample size and generalizability and research. And when you start to provide all that skill set and those tools, when students go out into the world and they hear information. Okay, well, great. Wine is healthy for you. Where's the original research article? What's the research methodology? How many people do they talk to? Who funded the study? Oftentimes you hear about drinking bottled water is healthy or whatever, and then you learn like the Dasani or Coca Cola or whatever funded the study.

##### [00:25:55.740] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

So then you have to seriously question that. Okay. Because there's a bias there. And then you introduce bias. I bring all these things into class and I think it's increasingly important because we're constantly getting all this information. I mean, going online any time of the day is like drinking from a firehose. You open it up and it just blasts your eyeballs. Wow. And the students, my esteemed colleague Alfred Hermita at the University of British Columbia once remarked that our students are growing up out loud. And I love that. Right? I mean, they're saying all these things online, they're receiving all these things. And I'm grateful I don't have kids because I couldn't even imagine the parents who are trying to. How do you teach your kids well? Crosby Still, Nash and Young. Great tune. That's actually in the beginning of our book, Teach Your Children well. Wow. What an incredible task it's going to be as we move forward, trying to instill a type of digital literacy and critical thinking and understanding because we want to alleviate the social ills of our time. Bigotry, racism, sex, all this kind of horrible stuff that most people can agree that, well, we want to get rid of that.

##### [00:27:05.220] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

I mean, they're always going to be I'm a member of the Nazis. Okay. But most people aren't. How do we get everybody to collectively sort of move forward to make the world a better place for all of us? Because I think most of us want that. And I think at the end of the day, most people have more in common with each other than not. Most people just want to be respected. They want to be paid a wage that's going to let them support their family and live a moderate life. We all share that, and fewer and fewer people are being able to do that. We keep hearing that the gap is widening between the rich and the poor. And I think it's been suggested already online that if things keep going the way they do, Elon Musk is going to be the world's first trillionaire next year. I mean, come on. That's obscene. In my view, it's obscene, but nonetheless, I digress.

##### [00:27:54.910] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

So collaboration went well with Stacey. This book, by all accounts, is looking to be successful. Have you thought about the next book?

##### [00:28:05.040] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

We've already had those conversations, and right now. So the next book was Stacey. I'm writing a book right now that I've already started on. And that book is tentatively titled Doing Public Sociology. So it's a book about how to engage with media, how to get ideas out there. And there's a whole sort of argument going on in sociology and other disciplines that's public sociology, public anthropology, so on and so forth of breaking down the Ivory tower barriers between the College Professor sort of sitting in their office and being holier than thou and writing all these really smart stuff that nobody can understand. What's the point of that? So putting information out there so that people could understand it and make their lives better. So the whole book is on that. That's a separate thing that I'm doing. And Stacey and I've talked about our next book being on cancel culture. So if anyone's interested.

##### [00:28:56.930] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

So you're not shying away. You're going to dig right into another very controversial topic.

##### [00:29:02.990] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Yeah, we talk about it in this book. In the defining section of the comic book, there's cancel culture sort of woven throughout the book and what it is. And I think people will find there's something for everyone in this book. Has #MeToo, gone too far? Has it not gone far enough? There are people that argue both of those, and we talk about both of those perspectives. We criticize both of those perspectives in the book. And in those conversations are bits and pieces of cancel culture because that is often sort of being stepping in or being used in place of other accountability mechanisms or punishment mechanisms. But what does cancel culture even mean? It also seems to be very politicized. So typically when the left leaning Democrats, whatever you want to call them, if they cancel their own other left leaning people, that typically seems to work well. Right. Those people aren't really heard from them again. But the right leaning and Conservatives and Republicans, they typically are the ones screaming and yelling the most about canceled culture. But if I can hear you, you're not canceled. And it's still in the preliminary stages. But we think the whole idea of canceled culture exists as a political phenomenon, and probably that's going to be the next book.

##### [00:30:15.390] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

Yeah, very nice. So can I take you back to 2021 when you first learned that you would be honored as a Distinguished Alumni of Harper College? How did you feel? What was that moment like?

##### [00:30:29.690] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

I'm going to say something here that's going to embarrass me, but it's important for your question. I got the phone call from the President, and it took me a solid couple of seconds. I didn't hear her say who she was. I kind of picked the phone up, but it was noisy where I was at, and I missed the first part and I didn't know what she was saying. And for the first few seconds, I hate to say this, I thought it was a solicitation. I thought somebody was calling to sell me something. And it kind of sort of slowly dawned on me like, oh, my God, this is the President of this is the College President. Wow. Okay. Thank you. I was like, really deferential and I was really shocked. And I think probably thinking it was a solicitation and not really understanding what's happening in the first few seconds. And in fairness, again, it was loud. And I didn't hear her right away because I didn't expect it. It seemed completely out of the blue and it was very humbling. I was honored. I sort of was at a loss of words initially. And then I sort of started talking and we ended up having a very nice conversation.

##### [00:31:29.550] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

We chatted for seven or ten minutes on the phone, and I hung up and Stacey said, what was that all about? Who was that? I said, you're never going to believe this. And she said, wow, really? And I said, yeah. Again, I think I was kind of at a loss for words. It was very humbling.

##### [00:31:43.260] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

That's fantastic. So I believe I'm correct, you're involved with the John Howard Society board of directors, as well as Everyone Eats, which is a nonprofit community food initiative in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada. Can you talk about the role volunteering and philanthropy play in your life and your career?

##### [00:32:02.600] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Oh, yeah. I mean, it's always important to give back when you can. I've done this in several ways. I'll get to those two things in a second. One of those things is the public sociology bit. So I give public presentations or talks whenever anybody asks. I don't charge speakers fees, those sorts of things. That's one version of that. Everyone Eats in the John Howard first, I'll speak to John Howard. So John Howard is an organization that exists all across North America. There's a chapter in Chicago. And it is a group society that helps with primarily men. So the sister society quite literally is the Elizabeth Fry Society. And John Howard helps men who are reintegrating people back into society, whether they're coming out of prison or they're on probation or parole. And this is really important work because we often hear, oh, do the crime, do the time, and then you get out of jail or prison, and all crimes are not considered equal. Sometimes people do stupid stuff or who knows what the situation is? They're people. And often they don't get out of they get out of prison and there's nowhere to go.

##### [00:33:14.160] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Nobody's going to hire them. How do they rent an apartment? Sometimes they might not have a driver's license. There are so many things people don't think about, these human beings who are trying to do better again. And then the problem is when John Howard and societies don't exist, the individuals fall right back into a circle of crime because, well, I can't get a job. I can't get a driver's license. I can't live anywhere. I guess I'll go to sell whatever it is. And this is why there are higher recidivism and repeat offender rates of people who do anyway. So John Howard helps those people, and that's their clientele. So I've been on the board of directors since 2009. I started in British Columbia, and then I was on board in Ontario, and now it's in Manitoba. And we help people when they get out of jail. The brand in jail, for example, here's where you get a driver's license, here's how to get housing. We have a men's support system that helps men deal with anger management issues. Right. So you're angry and how to deal with your emotions. I mean, oftentimes men don't have emotional literacy.

##### [00:34:23.190] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Oftentimes we look at the stereotype, but men are sort of socially allowed or socially acceptable to feel two types of emotions, happy and anger. But when men cry in public, oh, don't be like, be a man. All this kind of toxic masculinity nonsense. So we have programs that help men become emotionally literate, which is great for interpersonal relationships, all that kind of stuff. And arguably, these folks, people who've done prison or have interactions with the law, I mean, they're the most marginalized people in society. And if we don't care for these people, who will? That, in a nutshell, is what John Howard does. It's an amazing organization. Anyone listening? I recommend you Google it, see if you can get involved. You can volunteer. We do fundraisers, help. So with Everyone Eats, which in Brandon, Manitoba, is attached to John Howard Society. I cannot and I will not claim credit for creating it. My colleagues, Ted and Ross Robinson, Ted is on the board, and Ross is the executive director of the John Howard Society, brand new Manitoba. It was their idea. I'm involved and I help out, but they created a free meals program.

##### [00:35:29.880] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

And so they source food that grocery stores throw away, that might be a few days short of the shelf life or whatever. And it should be criminal. The amount of food that is sent to dumpster, it's nuts. It's insane. So Ted is very business savvy. He knows a lot of people. And so he's rented a refrigerator truck. That's where it started. And we'd get different kind of put food in there. And then we got the chef and they hired the chef and they do meals three days a week. I think it's Monday, Wednesday, Friday. Now there are 60 or 80. I'm going to get the number wrong meals a day that are completely free cost nothing. So you go on at midnight and then you put in your order, you can get four at a time. And then we deliver the meals for free. So I've done that with them, too. We hop in the car and we drive around. It doesn't cost any money. And oftentimes these are people who can't use other types of food services, who are immobile for whatever reason or sick. We deliver the meals, but it's also a pay, which you can.

##### [00:36:27.850] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

So at midnight, when the free meals go, the average cost for the meals, I think it's about $8. So you can pay $2.$01, $8, $16. So you buy your meal, buy for someone else, and it's become self sustaining. And it's fantastic. So I've been involved in that. And I don't know if you want me to say more about that, but yeah.

##### [00:36:44.860] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

That's just fantastic. As we close out. And thanks again for being a part of the show, Chris. We really appreciate it. We always ask our Harper Talks guests, what advice do you have for current Harper students?

##### [00:36:56.730] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Go to class!

##### [00:36:58.670] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

Show up.

##### [00:37:00.050] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Yeah, show up. I would say chase your dreams. Chase your dreams, people. When I came to Harper, I sort of didn't have a really good sense of what it was I was doing with myself. And sociology got me fired up and I chased that. And here I am and come to Harper College. And maybe you don't have that dream yet. And what I would say is a recommendation, expand your palette, take classes that you otherwise think might not be interesting or you might not know about. And the more that you learn, the more you're going to expand your intellectual palate and you might find your dream. There something that gets you going. And that's what I'd say. It's kind of vague. I don't know if it really speaks well to your question. It's a really interesting question. It's a good question. And I can say the usual things, be yourself and never give up and all that kind of stuff. But I would say also hang out at Harper if you can. One of the things with Harper College, it's a commuter campus. And if you can spend time hanging out out in the quad and the grass or having a coffee at the Starbucks with other friends and you get to know more people again.

##### [00:38:13.170] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

You're going to expand not only your social circle and these people probably you'll be in touch with them throughout the rest of your lives but it's going to expand your interests and that's important that Harper College is. It's a place to come to begin. And when you begin here, it leads to new beginnings and really important. It can lead to important stuff and that's what it did for me. And I have friends I'm still very close friends with that I've known for 25 years who I met at Harper and I learned from them, they learned from me and it's a fantastic place for that. For learning what your dreams are and then chasing those dreams and making something of yourself.

##### [00:38:53.930] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

That's a wonderful sentiment. Thank you so much, Chris. Really appreciate you being on Harper Talks.

##### [00:38:58.680] - Dr. Christopher Schneider

Thank you for having me.

##### [00:38:59.940] - Jeff Julian, Harper Talks Guest Host

Dr. Christopher Schneider is a graduate of Harper College and a 2021 Distinguished Alumni. If you're enjoying Harper Talks, please subscribe and while you're at it rate and review us so that others might find us. Harper Talks is a coproduction of Harper College Alumni Relations and Harper Radio. Our show is produced by Shannon Hynes. This episode was edited by Brian Diaz. Our online content producer is Ashley Rosenthal and our theme music was created by Aidan Cashman. I'm Jeff Julian. Thanks for listening.