

Mary Makris: I would describe Jakki as a powerhouse female who is kind, funny, very smart, creative, and cares deeply about all her relationships. She's going to engage you, inspire you to want to learn more, and help you achieve your goals.

Carmen Thissen: I think Jakki is there for her students in a way that is really really special... One time a couple years ago, I had just found out about a conference happening in just one month in Madrid. It looked perfect for the research we were doing. And I thought, well there's probably no way that I can go to Madrid in a month, but I'll ask Jakki just in case. So I told Jakki about it and she immediately hopped on the internet and she found a plane ticket, she called up some people and found some scholarship money, and she just made it happen. And in a month I was sitting there in Madrid at this conference doing research and I thought wow, I don't know that a lot of professors could have made that happen and done that for a student, and it was just so meaningful to me.

MM: Her classes are hard, but they're worth it. And if you didn't think marketing was interesting before, you certainly will afterward.

KINCH: This is Confluence where great ideas flow together, a podcast of the Graduate School of the University of Montana. On Confluence, we travel down the tributaries of wisdom and beauty that enrich the soil of knowledge on our beautiful mountain campus.

You just heard the voices of Mary Makris (Muh-CREASE) and Carmen Thissen (TEE-sen), graduate students in UM's Masters program in Business Administration, talking about our guest on this week's episode, Dr. Jakki Mohr, in the Department of Management and Marketing in UM's College of Business. In 2008, she was named Regents Professor, the highest faculty rank at UM.

I'm your host, Ashby Kinch, Dean of the Graduate School. Every episode, we ask our guests to read a poem, or a short passage from literature, about rivers. Jakki will read a passage from Henry David Thoreau's "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" published in 1849, but based on a trip he took with his brother John to the White Mountains in 1839. From there, we'll jump into the current of conversation, where we discuss Jakki's journey to UM, her recent work on helping companies think about the importance of building value out of natural capital, and the importance of developing a new ethic of business based in the concept of "net positive" contributions to human thriving. She also delves into some of the hard lessons she learned as a female professor in a male-dominated field, which has influenced her own role as a force for positive and supportive mentoring. Her own account of shifting careers, taking on new problems, and always looking for a way to contribute to her community provide a sterling example of how to convert hardships into opportunities for growth.

Welcome to Confluence, where our beautiful rivers are conduits to "distant enterprise and adventure"!

Jakki Mohr: I'm reading today from Henry David Thoreau, "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers."

The sluggish artery of the Concord Meadows steals unobserved through the town, without a murmur of a pulse beat, a huge volume of matter ceaselessly rolling through the plains and valleys of the substantial Earth, making haste from the high places of the earth, to its ancient reservoir, the murmurs of many a famous river on the other side of the globe reach even to us here, as to more distant dwellers on its banks. And I trust I may be allowed to associate our muddy but much abused Concord River, with the most famous in history, the Mississippi, the Ganges, and the Nile, whose journeying atoms from the Rocky Mountains and the Himalaya have a kind of personal importance in the annals of the world. The heavens are not yet drained of their source. Rivers must have been the guides which conducted the footsteps of the first travelers. They are the constant lore, when they flow by our doors to distant enterprise and adventure. They are the natural highways of all nations, not only leveling the ground and removing obstacles from the path of the traveler, quenching his thirst, and bearing him on their bosoms, but conducting him through the most interesting scenery, the most populous portions of the globe, and where animal and vegetable kingdoms attain their greatest perfection.

AK: Thank you for joining us, Jakki.

JM: Thank you for having me.

AK: It's so great to see you in person. Of course, COVID has been hard for everyone that way, we haven't seen all of our friends. And you and I have known each other a really long time. So it's just fantastic to be able to make this connection and talk again. And I can't tell you how happy I am that you told me that you're a fan of Henry David Thoreau. What does he mean to you as a writer? Why? What's the connection?

JM: For me, the writers who are naturalists who situate their work in the natural world, they always have spoken to me in some way. I think growing up being outside was such a fundamental part of my growing up that I just resonate with writers who situate their work in the outside world.

AK: And so tell us more about that. You grew up in Idaho. And I mean, this passage is amazing on a lot of levels. But one level is just the river. I mean, we have that here in Missoula. We have this river that runs through it, you know, in the famous book by Maclean. But there's rivers all over the west, that kind of anchor communities. What's your connection?

JM: Yeah. So growing up in Boise, we had the Boise River and of course, Idaho is famous for the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Area that was designated a wilderness area during my time there. And it's a very iconic trip that most people growing up in Idaho take at some point. In fact, my brother still takes a 21 day, self guided float trip every year down the Salmon with a group of his friends, and it's just something that when you grow up out west, floating on the rivers is part of your growing up experience.

AK: Yeah, it's part of the culture, it's threaded in. And this passage came to my mind and it's got, its resonant with what you just said. It's based on a trip that Thoreau took with his brother John up in the White Mountains. And the text was published until 10 years later. And so what came out of it is a very Thoreauvian discussion of rivers in a kind of philosophical sense. And I love this passage, because it captures all of that, the number of ways that a river means right, it means it's got this natural function, but it's, you know, by the end of the passage, we're in sort of metaphysical you know, the heavens and, and then, you know, we're in this practical world, it's its commerce, it's exchange. It's all these other components that make rivers vital to human economy and human society and civilization.

JM: The other thing that I like about this passage is it's very much grounded in what I'm doing in some of my current research, which is this idea of how rivers, ultimately, we need to take care of them because they take care of us. And it says that this is a very famous but much abused river very much like our own Clark Fork River.

AK: Right in 1839, right? So, you know, and we have this local history of our much abused river, and you've been here for 25 years. And you know, just in our time here, I've been here 19, there's been dramatic changes, you know, we can watch it year after year getting cleaner, the dams coming out. And all that comes, all the good that comes from that.

JM: Yeah. And of course, living on the Rattlesnake and watching that dam come out this summer was also interesting, and seeing how they're working to repair some of the riparian areas up there.

AK: Yeah, yeah. So the repair work. It's such a that is a good segue kind of into your journey. And we're going to come back to kind of recent research, but tell us about your your journey. How did you end up, how did you end up a professor of marketing? What was the journey that took you there?

JM: Well, again, having grown up in Boise, I did attend Boise State University. And I had a, just an amazing professor there, who I just so admired his rigor and his high expectations of the student work. And I worked pretty closely with him for a long period of time, and based on that decided to go and get a Master of Science, in marketing. And so I went to Colorado State for that.

I always had a dream of working in Silicon Valley. HP is a very iconic company growing up in Boise. They had the laser printer division there during my early years, and I had an internship during college. And so when I graduated from my master's, I did move to work for HP in Silicon Valley. Right at a really exciting time. It was at 1983, which is when the personal computer was introduced as a consumer device, and it was HP's first foray into the consumer market, as opposed to selling engineering workstations.

AK: Wow. So you're just right there at the ground floor.

JM: Exactly. And again, coming from Boise and moving to, you know, everybody now calls it the valley. But to be there in 1983, when things were just getting started, it was a crazy period of time. And I'm really grateful I had that part of my journey. And I was just never happy living among all the wealth and the materialism and competing with, you know, 6 million people to go to Yosemite on the weekends.

AK: So that was already kind of a problem for you even, you know, in the 80s, you already kind of sensing that sense of a crowd and the pressure of being around people.

JM: 100%, yeah. And so I was laid off from my job. And I had already applied to go back to get a PhD. And so you know, sometimes things happen for a reason. And so the writing was on the wall for me, and it was a choice of do I stay in California to go to graduate school? Or do I go to the San Francisco of the Midwest, which is Madison, Wisconsin, and get my PhD there?

AK: That's a good one. I haven't heard that one before. I've heard a lot of other things about Madison, but not San Francisco of the Midwest. It's also one of the greener capitals, you know.

JM: I have to tell you coming from San Francisco, once I got there, there was nothing like San Francisco about it. It was the context of the Midwest, and it was a liberal city. But there was no comparison to San Francisco.

AK: Yeah, yeah. Interesting. And so there, you studied business, you got your PhD. But by that point, you already kind of knew you would do an academic career. In other words, you already made a decision, that that's the route you wanted to take.

JM: Yeah, again, going back to my master's years at Colorado State University, I was a TA there. And one of my professors unexpectedly died during the course of the semester. And somebody thought it was a good idea to ask me to take over his classes, because I was probably the one most familiar with what was going on in them, even though I had no business teaching the subject matter. And I really enjoyed the experience of teaching in a way that I had never ever considered before. And so that definitely was in the back of my mind as I moved to Silicon Valley and thought, hey, you know, more education won't hurt. I can always go back to industry, but this will open up a few more pathways for me professionally.

AK: Right. So yeah, that's what makes business kind of interesting, right? Is that, that further credential doesn't sort of foreclose going back into business and working in the private sector and, and then merging the two. And that's kind of where your research kind of went right? That is your earliest phase of your career was focused on communications, and especially thinking about disruptive technologies, in

the context of how they get to market and how companies kind of figure out ways to take this disruptive technology out into a larger market.

JM: Yeah. In fact, in marketing, we have a sub discipline that's called "go to market strategies." And so when I was working on my dissertation research at the University of Wisconsin, I had family friends who worked at IBM, and they funded my dissertation research, because at the time, again, think back to the late 1980s, if you could, IBM was making a huge shift in product strategy in order to enter the personal computer market. And when you're selling \$300,000 mainframes compared to \$3,000 PCs, you have to change your go to market strategy, because you know, it's not profitable otherwise. So IBM actually funded my dissertation research to understand what would be the issues they faced, as they decided to totally fundamentally rethink their go to market strategy from the IBM Big Blue sales reps, to going through independent retailers throughout the country. And it was really a remarkable opportunity for a doctoral student to have that kind of a database to work on.

AK: It's an amazing opportunity. And I think I'm fascinated about this from the standpoint of kind of the conceptual underpinnings of innovation so that you know, you're in an industry that's changing rapidly, always changing rapidly, right? So what's driving that innovation is new ideas within engineering and in the subtext of, you know, semiconductor production and Moore's law, right, that there's all these pressures in the technology side. But what I mean, I guess I want to ask this as a question, you know, what does a marketing professor bring to the table? That's a kind of different way of thinking about that same set of problems? And what are the kind of concepts and theories that underpin it?

JM: Yeah, that's a really great question, especially because in technology and disruptive innovation, we often do think of the technological underpinnings that drive those inventions. And that's certainly critically important. And we see that today with a bunch of new technologies coming down the pike in terms of quantum computing, and biomaterials and foundries for rethinking the way we build and develop medicines, for example. And the fact is a marketing perspective is critically important, because marketing reflects the needs of the marketplace and what customers need and want and are willing to pay for. And that includes not only consumer marketers, of course, people who are going to be selling products to you or me, but more importantly, business customers. And those business customers have huge risks on the table every time they change the approach to doing business. And companies don't have a huge appetite for risk. And that pragmatic orientation towards how will this technology help me run my business better, is a huge barrier. Because they don't see the technological benefits. They just want the business benefits.

AK: Yeah, so the trade off there for a new technology could be huge. It could be changing all of their practices soup to nuts. And so they need to see what that payoff is going to be, and they need to know what it is.

JM: More importantly, it's the sale of technology to business customers, where the real opportunities frequently are, but those businesses face a lot of barriers to changing the way they do business. And they want to know in advance, if the technology that they're going to be purchasing is actually going to help them either make more money or save more money. It's not the technological properties alone that are appealing to more pragmatic business adopters.

AK: Yeah, and I find it fascinating that your work recently has kind of been taking that model but shifting it into sort of environmental theory. And I want to drill down on this because I think it's fascinating conceptually, that on the one hand, you just said sort of business are conservative, so are humans, right? Most humans are not wanting to change their fundamental behaviors without a huge incentive to do so. And that's where we find ourselves with environmental change. It's very hard to sell a broad public on the need. So how has your, I mean, I kind of want to ask this two different ways sort of how has your research shifted in this area? What drove that shift? And what is it like to do that work here at Montana in particular, you know, on Confluence we really like to talk about interdisciplinary collaboration. I know that's been really, really important to this shift in your own work.

JM: Yeah, sure. So, about 10 years ago now, 2010, I was working on the third edition of my book on marketing of high technology products and innovations. And I'll just be really honest, my heart wasn't in it. And I just...

AK: The first two editions, your heart was in it. But number three...

JM: Ha ha, yeah, it was hard to get motivated. And some of it was the concerns that I had personally about seeing how our climate was changing. And again, this was early in that process. And my recognition that business was a major culprit in the problems that we were facing. And as a marketing professor, there's all this pressure to engage in tactics that, you know, grow revenue, without concern or disregard for the environmental impacts. And I was becoming increasingly uncomfortable with that in living my own values as somebody who likes to get out into nature and really believes that we have to live in harmony with nature as a human species. And so I decided in the third edition of my book, and I had to convince my co authors to go along with this, that all the examples we would use would be in the service of technology and innovation for either social or environmental benefit. And so we premiered some really early technologies that now people take sort of for granted. So for one thing, we looked at life straws, which are water filtration devices for people to use, where they can't afford to have clean drinking water. That's a pretty common device now, you know, 10 years later. And at that time, I decided I would build some bridges across campus. We have a top notch forestry program, biology program, wildlife biology, and I just felt like business should not be separate from that research that's happening on this world class campus. And so I spent a lot of time having coffee during my sabbatical with different scholars on campus, and asking them questions about how did change happen in their disciplines? And what were the barriers to getting better solutions to things like polluted rivers in place

on the ground? And that led to just really delightful collaborations on the Clark Fork River to bring more of an innovation perspective to why is it so hard to get this work done on the ground?

AK: That's fascinating, so so that they're those coffee, I'm really, you know, curious about how those kinds of conversations go down. Because I think part of what we try to do on Confluence actually is sort of elevate what a good intellectual ecosystem looks and feels like, right? A lot of us work in our offices and work on our publications. But a lot of the magic happens actually over coffee, and in situations where you want something from them, and they may not know it, but they're eventually going to get something back from you. Right? So could you kind of drill down into one of those connections that you made with a professor and how it kind of worked out?

JM: Yeah. So one of the first coffees that I had was with Ric Hauer. He is...trying to think the best way to describe his research, he uses airplanes to fly over wilderness areas using a type of radar, I think it's called LIDAR to actually measure ecological attributes. And so he's pretty high tech. Which speaks right away to me. And he was starting a new program called the systems ecology program, which was designed to be both a depth program in terms of a scientific area, for example, you know, aquatic ecology or something, but also a breadth program where the students who were trained in that field could understand the context in which those barriers would be surface to change on the ground. So that could include science, communication, journalism, legal issues around you know, endangered species, business, for example, because the business context, the spending on restoration to improve degraded areas is in the billions of dollars. And so to me, it's a fundamental business problem as much as anything. And so he was so warm and welcoming and invited me to present my research on innovation and how it might change the lens the way that ecologists were looking at barriers to changing the way ecology was practiced on the ground. And based on my presenting my research, people were really eager to learn more about how marketers look at behavior change, and how different strategies we use in business could actually drive behavior change in context other than buying and selling products.

AK: Yeah, and the behavior change part of business, I think is a super important thing for the broad listener and broad public to know about. That so much of the research is actually grounded in sort of behavioral psychology, you know, business, you know, there are certain fields that are kind of like, this is a meta discipline, it can draw on a lot of different theoretical underpinnings, but for marketing in particular, that's behavioral psychology. It's, you know, what people want, what are their desires? And how do we understand those desires? And sometimes the market gives us really clear information about that, sometimes it doesn't, right, sometimes you have to shift the market too, and when there are values that aren't, let's say, endogenous to business, you got to bring them in and make it a part of that. So that's part of your work, or part of your work is valuation of natural resources. Can you talk a little bit about how that interfaces with behavioral change, like what are we trying to accomplish by getting the broad public to think about putting a value on natural resources?

JM: Absolutely. So interestingly, yesterday, in my class, we were talking about why isn't business doing a better job of using artificial intelligence to help identify patterns in consumer behavior, which is kind of a classic marketing problem. But the guest speaker I had, his name is Christopher Penn, he runs a company called trusted insights. And we're using his book this semester called "AI for Marketers." And in the course of that conversation, he said, the fact is, accounting decisions rule the company. Because everything at the end of the day depends on how a company reports its profitability to its shareholders. And that's true even for nonprofit organizations, they still have an executive board that they have to show the bottom line. It's true for private companies, family owned companies. And to me, I jumped in. And I said, that resonates so strongly, because my research on companies who want to do better by the environment in terms of bringing sustainable innovations to the market that actually are less polluting and more environmentally friendly. If they don't pencil out from an accounting perspective, it doesn't matter how brilliant they are.

AK: Right.

JM: And so that led to a research project with a student of mine to study, why don't companies actually account for their impacts and dependencies on nature? They have to report risk mitigation strategies to their investors. The biggest risk they face right now is

AK: Environmental degradation.

JM: Exactly.

AK: Climate change, which is going to disrupt business and supply chains. And yeah.

JM: Yeah. And so we're seeing that increasingly in the investor community, but we're not seeing it in the strategic decisions that companies are making about what they're doing. And as a result, I partnered with an organization called the Capitals Coalition. In business, we talk about human capital, financial capital, physical assets as capital. Well, there's this thing called natural capital, all forms of capital can have a valuation put on them that is in monetary terms, dollars and cents. And so Carmen and I studied 20 top companies around the world, from a sustainability perspective, talked to their finance directors, sustainability directors, just it's a small world sort of moment. But the sustainability director of the Kering Corporation that makes Puma and Gucci was one of my students at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

AK: Wow.

JM: And so calling, you know, the chief sustainability officer and finding we had that connection was just mind blowing to me. But we interviewed these people. And we said, we know sustainability is important to you, what are the barriers you're facing in getting those metrics put on your financial and accounting books? They pretty much said, until it's required, it's a nice to have thing. And so accounting runs the show, and I feel like we need more forward looking mandates around what is required for companies to report.

AK: Well, that's a great segue into this concept of net positive, which has now become quite current. And you know, it's topical in any number of ways. I mean, Glasgow, is I guess it is still technically ongoing. When this gets released, it will be long in the rearview mirror. But, you know, there's a lot of talk about shifting our rhetorical and conceptual understanding from net zero, which is really about carbon, right? It's about carbon neutrality to this notion of net positive, what are the restorative things we need to do for the environment, but also more broadly? In here, I'm thinking about this book that Paul Polman and Andrew Winston wrote, "Net Positive," which is globally, what does the business contribute to human well being? So part of that is going to be the environment. And that's the area you're working in. But it's this broader sort of default switch, we're trying to switch our understanding, to not just getting kind of negative consumption of dropping carbon emission, but a positive conception of what business can do to sort of promote positive values. Talk a little bit about what that shift is all about, and what where it's accomplishing that goal and where it's not.

JM: Yeah, that's a great question. And from my perspective, forward looking businesses set an aggressive goal to be carbon neutral a decade ago, and those innovators and leaders in the space are now forging new ground to actually be restorative or regenerative to the environments in which they operate. And I just want to say that while all these companies who attended the COP26, in Glasgow, are trying, and governments are trying to set ambitious goals to be net zero by 2050, it's like, that is too late. They should be setting a near term goal for...

AK: 2030.

JM: 2025.

AK: Yeah, yeah.

JM: And getting after it. And so while those companies are still trying to figure out how to be net zero, the leaders are moving to what's called net positive. So here in town, as you know, we have the Biomimicry Institute, which is a nonprofit organization and the consulting arm Biomimicry 3.8. They actually have a consulting practice that's focused on working with the largest companies in the world, to help them develop what are called environmental performance standards, where they measure how much clean water will we be returning after we build a factory that takes up you know, what previously was farmland or a forest land. What are we going to be doing to actually purify the air so that we leave it

cleaner than when we took it into our facility. And an example of this type of thinking is interface floor, they actually have built a factory that functions like a forest. And this idea of thinking of being in harmony with the natural world and being part of it. Again, we can put dollar and cents value on those things. But it requires a different sensibility than most business people have, where they've always viewed nature as a source of extractive inputs that will help them run their business. And they're free, there are no externalities that they have to be responsible for. So this idea of net positive is really changing the equation so that companies think more proactively about leaving the world in a better place than what they found it. And this is just so consistent with the way we think in the west. When we go backpacking, we always think about leaving your campsite cleaner when you leave than when you found it. And so to ask business to kind of be grounded in the local, even while they're these global businesses is a fundamental change that I think will come. But as you said, people are inherently risk averse. And we're so used to the status quo. And when we think about the fundamental philosophical mind shift that is required to reconceptualize this, it is drastic.

AK: Yeah, it's drastic, and it's hard to accomplish across a massive population. So one of the things Pullman and Winston talk about is how important the hearts and mind side of it is for the leadership. And you just spoke to that as well, that it takes a sort of concept shift. But it also takes, at some point, massive shifts of the fuller population that our consumers need to be educated and aware of how that externality of the environment needs to be built into their prices. And if that means higher prices for XYZ product, they need to be educated that that's actually not a higher price. That's just capturing the true cost that has otherwise been externalized. So these are big issues. And it seems like marketing is a kind of key mechanism to bridge that gap between...what you would say is, you know, innovative cutting edge companies that are making this important, but this broader consumer market.

JM: Definitely marketing plays a really big role there in terms of recalibrating what we take to be kind of normal or expected. In fact, at its simplest level marketing is about setting expectations. And if we can think effectively about so much of the work that's being done right now in behavioral economics, about messaging around how to promote behavior change, so that people are nudged in the right path of doing the right thing as opposed to trying to, you know, persuade them or argue with them. I mean, it has to be quite subtle to be effective.

AK: Yeah. And so you use that term nudge, which comes out of behavioral economics and Herbert Gintis has talked quite a bit about this. He sort of explores the evolutionary biology root of this set of questions, that we also have kind of some instinctive natural altruism, but that our marketing and our broader consumer mechanisms don't always tap into. So it's largely a question of which of the two, you know, like the old allegory of the two wolves? Which, which wolf are you feeding? Are you feeding the consumer wolf? Or are you feeding maybe the wolf that recognizes a common stake and altruistic stake in some of these value questions?

JM: Yeah, it's so interesting to think about a wolf having an altruistic stake..

AK: Well, they're communal beings.

JM: They are. And in fact, I remember one of my first conversations reaching out across campus was after a lecture that Ray Callaway had given about how nature is red in tooth and claw. And it was a Kropotkin, like approach. And I kind of said, is that always true? And if that's true, then what about, you know, being in harmony with nature? And what does that really look like? And we kind of forged a long term friendship. And again, another research project based on a simple conversation after I heard him lecture when I was trying to build these bridges across campus.

AK: Yeah.

JM: So I do think that as we nudge consumers to, you know, do I want the materialistic side of life? Or do I, am I open to learning about a different way? I think, talking about that today, the day before Thanksgiving is really important, because Thanksgiving is not Thanksgiving for a lot of people, now, it's Black Friday, right? And it's been totally, you know, kind of hijacked in some way by the urge to make sure that the Christmas holiday spending makes everybody profitable from a business perspective. It's just like, how crazy is that?

AK: Yeah, notwithstanding it has to be said the native view of Thanksgiving, right? Which is a whole nother issue about, you know, whether we are true to that set of values, but gratitude. Yeah, it's a it's gratitude and generosity as values that (there) either are a lot of Americans who can accept Thanksgiving as a, you know, both good and bad, right, that it can accomplish both. But I think what you're talking about is this sort of gobbling up of it, pun intended, of this whole other consumer model, that it's that that has invaded almost every aspect of our lives. We can say no to that.

JM: We can. And I was having a conversation yesterday, in fact, with a colleague of mine in Australia, and he's always very curious about our American traditions and holidays. And he said, is Thanksgiving Pagan in some way? I said, Actually, what I recall as a child is the origins were really more around the settlers who came and how the Native Americans helped them survive that first period of time and...

AK: Got them through.

JM: Yeah. And so we kind of went back to some of the issues around crazy, you know, Columbus discovering, quote, unquote, America. And, you know, he's just really curious about how we, as white people in America, reconcile all of this. So I just think the philosophy of understanding what we do as society and how business drives what we do as society, and what we take for granted about that, and how business could actually drive a whole different value system, if they thought that it would be

profitable.

AK: Right.

JM: And that that bottom line again, going back to the accounting is kind of the key thing, I think.

AK: Yeah, that's excellent. Well, part of what we do on Confluence also is, you know, you've told your journey about how you became a professor, but you hit some bumps in the road, you just you told us about being laid off, right as one of the triggers. And we use this idea of the CV of failures because one of the things we're trying to do is destigmatize discussions, especially among graduate students who might be experiencing imposter syndrome, they might have that feeling which many of us had ourselves when we are in grad school that we don't belong, that that everyone's smarter than we are. And I think you have a great story to tell about that. And I think especially I want to say, because you won't say it, but um, you know, 2008, you were named Regents Professor. So the end of that story is this incredible accomplishment, right, being elevated to the highest rank that you can as a professor, so tell us a little bit about your bumps on the road.

JM: Yeah, certainly. My first job after getting my PhD was at the University of Colorado Boulder. And I was so excited to get back to the west again after doing my years in the Midwest. But it was a pretty tough environment for a woman just I'll be really honest.

AK: Please.

JM: There was quite a bit of sexual based harassment and discrimination. And in fact, the third year that I was there, an external consultant was brought in to the university as a whole. Every female professor was asked to benchmark herself against a male counterpart who had been there the same number of years, had comparable teaching evaluations and comparable research records. And after three years at CU Boulder, I was already 15% behind my next male peer who was hired three years ago, newly minted PhD, teaching evaluations, superb research, record superb, I'd already fallen 15% behind salary. And so it just is an example of the environment I was working in. Also, as a woman, during your pre tenure period, it also happens to be when many women are, their biological clock is ticking. I had two children in Boulder during my pre tenure period. And as a result, when I did go up for tenure, I had asked for a delay on my tenure clock, which is pretty common academically for parental leave. But I was denied that. And so when I went up for tenure, the university did deny me tenure. And at the same time, I think they were quite anxious about the perception that perhaps I was being treated unfairly. And as a result, rather than technically having me denied tenure, they said that they would put me up again in a couple years, like retroactively giving me that the delay on my 10 year clock I had asked for, but I made a decision that I didn't want to work at that place anymore, even though it hurt me deeply. Because I'm

somebody who, I believe in excellence. And I feel like merit is always recognized in in that environment.

AK: It wasn't the case.

JM: No. And I was spending so much emotional energy fighting my battles at work. And I had these two little ones at home that I wanted to be pouring my emotional energy into them. And so I did make the decision to leave rather than go up for tenure again, in a year or two, particularly because when that letter came in, I was actually on a maternity leave. It just seemed nonsensical to me.

AK: Yeah.

JM: And so it's hard to talk about not getting tenure. It's like a deep dark kind of wound, even though I don't feel like it was fair, and that somehow I was not good enough. It was a horrible period in my life.

AK: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, only in retrospect, can you kind of rationalize it, but you can, obviously I can see it you, you can go back to that place and feel it. And it's such a powerful story to tell. You know, obviously, there's been progress. And there's been a lot of change in some fundamental policies, but just this, we have a much more flexible notion of what an academic career ought to look like, or can look like, I think, and I think that's not everywhere, but it's, it's moving in the right direction, and sort of recognizing the importance of honoring people's life paths and their life choices. And recognizing that productivity is about a whole career. It's not about that little narrow bottleneck around tenure, right? It's about generating scholars that are going to keep working hard, and keep doing innovative, interesting things, their whole careers.

JM: Yeah, and from my perspective, it was just such a brutal thing to sort of be forced out is how it felt, even though it was my choice to leave and not go through that again. But it's almost cliché to say that this has been an environment where my career has totally taken off, and it never would have at CU Boulder because I was constantly having to justify why my work was worthy.

AK: Yeah, spending all of your energy on this non productive side of it, rather than just doing your work.

JM: Yeah. And so I never would have written my book, if I was at CU Boulder, you know, that has just opened so many doors for me, I wouldn't have done the cross disciplinary collaboration, because it wasn't valued at that place. I feel like for me, it was the best thing that happened to me, in hindsight, was to not get tenure there. Yeah, seriously.

AK: And that's, and that's part of the reason why we bring these up is it's just, you know, communicate to our graduate students, you know, that your path may take some some turns, right? But you never

know, if you and especially if you focus on your values and focus on you know, what matters to you what you're really trying to achieve that, you know, you can keep moving through and find a different path. And so a great segue into what are you looking for in a graduate student? What jumps out at you when you're when you're working with them? What what kinds of paths do you hope that they'll pursue? What do you want to see them do?

JM: Yeah, that's a great question too. I tend to really be attracted to graduate students who really have kind of a different life path. Because they tend to have a broader base of experience. And I find, I'll use some examples here. They bring a more complex value system to the types of questions that they want to study. And business does tend to be a little bit narrow, and people who come to business think that it is, you know, all about, you know, one thing which is making money. And so for me to work with graduate students who really want to explore how can business engage in regenerative agriculture? And what does that look like? How can we use knowledge of biology to change the way business operates? How can we integrate music and creativity with the rigid hierarchy of the business world? Those kinds of students bring such interesting thought processes, questions and values to the work, that that's something that right away appeals to me. And when we get graduate assistants in the business school, our graduate director kind of knows the kind of connections that will allow me to help that student achieve their full potential as opposed to try to do the round peg square hole kind of thing.

AK: Yeah. What distinguishes graduate education and business from undergrad? What kinds of things are you hoping that, you know, developmentally, intellectually, they're gonna do to kind of differ?

JM: Yeah. So typically, as an undergrad, were teaching students a body of knowledge about how to do things in business, like what is the received knowledge or the frameworks that you would use to make certain decisions? As a graduate student, we really want them to be able to think more strategically about what is the right question we should even be addressing in the first place? And what is the role of values and ethics in guiding what question we're even asking? I think methodologically having really good methods skills about what data can you rely on to actually inform the decision you want to make? And what are the strengths and weaknesses of the data that you have in hand? Increasingly, business is relying on data science and data analytics to inform good decisions. And our students have to have this data literacy that goes far beyond simply, you know, looking at statistics and understanding a confidence interval or something like this, but to actually think algorithmically.

AK: Yeah.

JM: And so it's not an easy thing for students who come from a more conceptual mindset to really train their brain to look at those problems from a different kind of methodological lens.

AK: Yeah, excellent. And I think your program has had some success, obviously, most of your students are going to be going into business, they're going to be completing their MBAs and going off into business, but some of them kind of head off in the academic path as well. You've had some success in their area as well.

JM: Definitely. So my goal when I work with graduate students is to really identify what are the values that drive a student in terms of what meaning means in their life? What are their passions? For some of them, it does mean going to work in the largest corporations and playing a leadership role. For others, it means going into the nonprofit world and making sure that those nonprofits take advantage of the most cutting edge business tools that they have to achieve their mission. And for some of those students, it does mean going on to get a PhD. And figuring out how can they impart their own knowledge and wisdom to the next generation of students that they will then become the mentors for. And I think those relationships that you have with the students, particularly those that aren't sure where their paths are going to lead to be really open to options and values clarification, because I think a lot of people want to reinvent graduate students kind of in their own vision, kind of like parents want to do to their kids. And that we take a lot of pride as faculty when our students achieve according to our definition of achievement. And just being really open that that looks different for everybody is just so important.

AK: Crucial, yeah. I think I found that most of the graduate mentors across campus that are most known for their mentorship, have that latter attitude. They're not trying to replicate themselves, they're trying to and in fact, they're learning more, in some ways from the graduate students than then they're giving you know, at the at the back end, especially when we're producing PhDs. You know, our PhDs are breaking into new ground, you know. They're teaching our faculty something.

JM: Yeah. 100%

AK: Fantastic. Well, we end every episode the same way. It's our quick hitters. You ready for them?

JM: I am. I'm so excited.

AK: Morning or night person?

JM: Definitely morning.

AK: Western or eastern Montana?

JM: Definitely western.

AK:: That's pretty definitive. not to offend anyone out there in Billings.

JM: It's the mountains. You know? Yeah. It's like the eastern Montana just starts to feel like the Midwest to me, even though anybody out there is gonna say definitely not.

AK: What's your favorite mountain range?

JM: The Bitterroots.

AK: Those are beautiful. Yellowstone and Glacier?

JM: Definitely Glacier.

AK: Why?

JM: We have a little cabin up there, but it's a timeshare. We only go once a week. But we have made so many memories because we're totally off the grid for a week with our kids. And the minute you don't have WiFi, life changes as a family.

AK: Absolutely. Winter or summer?

JM: That's a tough one. I love...

AK: Good things in both.

JM: Yeah, I love skiing. But I do love summer.

AK: Sunrise or sunset?

JM: Definitely sunset.

AK: Why is that?

JM: There's something about the coolness of the evening, especially on the Rattlesnake Creek where our house is that is just, I don't know, it's a sensory experience. I can't even describe it.

AK: So I don't even have to ask you what your favorite Montana river is. It's the Rattlesnake.

JM: Yeah, we live right there. And just the beauty of the seasons, whether it's ice on the river, or the gushing of the springtime and listening to it, or the mellow summer and taking our little grandbaby out to wade in the water. I mean, honestly, it's every season is beautiful.

AK: And there's something about living on a river where you become a close observer of it, you know, you see it every day and all of its different lighting and the subtle changes that come from that there's a kind of...yeah, yeah, inspiring kind of almost artistic sense of being, you know, close connection to a river.

JM: Yeah. And for me, it's also I feel like my life is really busy. Our lives are always on the go, very frenetic. And there's something about being on the river that just slows me down. And that being present is so important. And it's easier to grab hold of that by the river.

AK: That's good. What's the one piece of music you could listen to for all eternity?

JM: Yeah, so this is really interesting. I have very eclectic music tastes, but I've always loved piano and Eric Satie has this amazingly, it's kind of the mood of the river again, I can just lose myself in it and be present. It's very moody deep music and I love it.

AK: We'll put a we'll put a link in the show notes.

JM: Yeah, definitely.

AK: What's the last voice you hear when you go to sleep at night?

JM: Oh, my God, I just said that I need to be in the moment. But I'm always making a list that I didn't get done in what I forgot to do. And especially in the night, I do some of my best problem solving while I'm sleeping. I'll wake up in the morning. And something that I didn't know wasn't working is solved in my brain. So clearly, I'm very active when I go to sleep.

AK: And you're putting a pin by saw your bed and writing and immediately, are you jumping to a computer?

JM: I've tried to not do that anymore. But I do spend about half an hour in the morning just listening to myself before I get into the flow of the day.

AK: Very smart. Thank you so much for joining us on Confluence. Jackie.

JM: It's been my pleasure. I think that the deep reflection you ask of people, I've learned so much from listening to the other interviews. So thank you.

AK: Thank you very much.