

Interviewee: Erin Bradbury
Interviewer: Viviana Ayala and Justin Mejia
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Location: The Law offices of Erin Bradbury, Holden Massachusetts
Transcriber: Viviana Ayala and Justin Mejia

Overseen by Dr. Carl Robert Keyes, Assumption College

Abstract: Erin Bradbury was born in Grafton Hill in Worcester in 1972. She attended Wachusett Regional High School, Smith College and Suffolk University Law School. She is a lawyer currently practicing law and owns her own practice in Holden, Massachusetts. Erin is a mother of two, a wife, and an active volunteer, and also has musical abilities. In this interview, she discusses her family aspects and how much they mean to her and how they influenced her life decisions. For example, she discusses how her mother was a “great debater” and how she taught her to stand up for herself. Erin says this is one of the reasons why she decided to become a lawyer. Erin volunteers for many community service organizations, and recognizes volunteer service as a defining factor of her identity. She enjoys helping the elderly, the poor, the homeless, and the uneducated. Her passion for helping out those in need will expand overseas when she visits Africa in order to help girls achieve a better education. She and her husband share the morals concerning community service and wish to pass them on to their children. The diversity found in her interests is impressive. Not only does she practice law, but she finds the time to travel, to commit to several community service organizations, remain close to her family and friends, and has plans to expand her musical ability in the future.

VA: We are completing a citywide oral history of the lives of Worcester women, aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences. Based on the goals of the 1850 National Women’s Rights Convention in Worcester, we are focusing on the areas of women’s education, health, work, and politic-politics/community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences with each of these areas. Thank you for your help with this important project.

JM: My name is Justin Mejia.

VA: I am Viviana Ayala.

JM: And we are going to be interviewing Ms.

EB: Erin Bradbury.

JM: Ok, what’s the first question?

VA: What is your full maiden name?

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EB: Erin Michelle O’Neil O-N-E-I-L.

VA: Where were you born?

EB: Worcester, Massachusetts.

VA: And when?

EB: [] 1972.

JM: okay, are you married?

EB: I am.

JM: What is your married name?

EB: Erin Bradbury.

VA: What is the name of your current husband?

EB: James Bradbury.

VA: Have you ever been married before?

EB: No.

JM: Do you have children?

EB: I do.

JM: How old are they?

EB: They are 10 and eight.

JM: Ok, so in respect to your family background what cultures/ ethnicities do you identify yourself with?

EB: I’m Caucasian but my heritage is Irish American. I have some German in there, some Native American and some Scottish.

JM: Ok.

VA: Tell me about your parents?

EB: My parents were very young when they had me. They were 20 years old. They lived in Worcester and were students at Worcester State College. They didn’t finish school so that they

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could care for me, my father opened a small retail shop in Webster town square called O'Neil Bicycle Shop and my mom stayed home to care for me. My parents went on to complete their educations later on. My mom graduated Worcester State College with a degree in speech pathology and a master program as well. My father just recently went back to school. He's in his 60's now, he's matriculated the University of Massachusetts at Lowell.

VA: Did your parents impose their culture on you during your child hood?

EB: Their culture? I would say definitely, yes. My father is Irish American and he was in a band and every Saint Patrick's Day we would go out and sing Irish songs. We always went to the Saint Patrick's Day and things like that so, yes definitely.

JM: Other than Worcester where have you lived during you life time?

EB: I've lived in Northampton Massachusetts, when I was at Smith College for four years and then I lived in Boston for four years for law school and I worked there about a year or two after law school.

VA: Other than for school you have always lived in Worcester?

EB: I have! And now I live in the next town up which is Holden, always in the area.

JM: What was the neighborhood where you grew up generally-generally like?

EB: It was on Grafton Hill, on the east side of Worcester between, Hamilton Street and Grafton Street, Dana Ave and there were a lot of Italian American families, Irish American families, Lebanese families, and some Spanish families, working class.

JM: Working class, okay, would you say that the environment was for lack a better word bad?

EB: No, not at all.

JM: It was a good neighborhood?

EB: It was a great neighborhood.

VA: Do your family members live in the same area?

EB: I have a lot of family members who still live in – Grafton Hills in Worcester.

VA: Do you believe you stayed in the Worcester community you grew up in because you family lives there?

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EB: Definitely, my husband is British and so he's over here, you know full time. It's very difficult on his family, but definitely stayed in central Mass because of my family.

JM: Okay so you would say that you very close with your family?

EB: Very close family.

VA: Does your husband culture affect your daily life?

EB: He's a foreigner but he – he was awarded his green card by lottery process prior to us getting married so, we didn't have to go through any immigration procedures in order for him to be able to stay, but his culture definitely impacts my daily life in terms of his family coming to visit, you know, a lot of phone calls, trying to stay in touch and it's – it's difficult because I have nieces and nephews who live partially in England and partially –another brother immigrated to Australia, Sydney Australia. I have a lot of family down in Sydney Australia as well through him.

VA: Do you and your husband travel a lot to England, to Australia to visit family?

EB: We do. We have a family reunion once every two or three years and we travel back to England or have his parents come over to see us at least once a year. We just had my niece from England who turned 16 for her 16th birthday, we bought her a plane ticket to come over for February vacation so we try and stay close even though we are very far apart.

JM: Ok.

VA: Do you believe this city faces any type of challenges?

EB: Of course, I mean I think Worcester faces a lot of challenges in terms of I think being more pedestrian friendly or having a central shopping area where students can feel comfortable. I think it's amazing that the city has so many colleges, yet I think sometimes when you visit the city it doesn't seem that college friendly or not like a college town like some other college towns that come to mind like Amherst, or Athens, Georgia, Bolder Colorado – they all have a much different vibe I think about them. I think the city can do a better job to encompass the local colleges better. I think transportation for people who work in Boston is a major issue. We know that we are trying to improve our commuter rail service but with all of the highways getting more and more congested, I think that's a major issue that needs to be addressed, but what I ultimately would like to see more jobs in Worcester in the biotechnical field and at the colleges.

VA: Has it always been like this since you were very young or has it gradually changed for the better or for the worse?

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EB: I think when I was younger people weren't as mobile. I remember my mother not driving when I was young and we would take the bus everywhere and a lot of families back then in the 70's were a one-car family. The price of gas was very high, inflation was very high, Jimmy Carter was the president and not a lot of families are as mobile as we are today with two or three cars in a family and people willing to take jobs further and further away. That wasn't the way that Worcester was you know back when I was growing up. I think the transportation issue has certainly evolved. But I don't really know what the college culture was you know back in the 70's and 80's I wasn't really paying attention to that.

JM: Ok.

VA: Have you ever had the desire to live someplace else other than Worcester?

EB: I really liked Northhampton, Massachusetts where I went to college, I think that that area has a lot to offer, but again because my family was here, you know, I ultimately decided to settle here and raise a family here.

JM: Ok how do you define your identity as a woman? Do you need me to clarify that more? So basically do you think you know how to, how to identify that?

VA: Well every aspect that you believe makes up your identity either ethnicity, your culture, your family background, religion, political views, everything.

EB: How do you term it again?

JM: [laughs] How do you identify yourself as a woman was the first question.

EB: Hmm, that's a really hard question [laughs] I don't really know that I've given it that much thought. I went to a women college so, I have a single sex education which I absolutely loved and I think really contributed to my academic success, my willingness to go on to do an advanced degree. I was really pushed academically. There were a lot of opportunities to make really close friendships with other women rather than being in competition with them. So Smith College played a humongous role in, you know, my success and then again guidance towards an advanced degree. I don't know if I would have gone on to do law school if I went, you know, had some other sort of experience. So that was a huge part of my background. Smith College still means a tremendous amount to me. I'm very close to my college friends and they have all gone on to do very successful things. Politically, I identify as a Democrat I wish there were more [laughs] women in politics, but I think seeing Elizabeth Warren come into office, I was grateful to finally have a female representative on behalf of Massachusetts in the Senate. I would be excited to see Hillary Rodham Clinton if she's going to run, so I'll be watching that. I just think that I've had a lot of opportunities as a women and I've never felt held back by anything, I think that people in prior generations certainly haven't had the opportunities that I've had in terms of

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education, job, and family. I have a very supportive husband who does a lot of the household tasks right alongside me. He's in charge of laundry [laughs], I do the cooking, [phone rings] so it's really a modern partnership.

JM: Ok.

VA: Apart from Smith College what other schools did you attend, high school and graduate college?

EB: I went to Wachusett Regional High School in Holden which was a very large school, I think my graduating class was 450 then I went to college and directly after that I went to Suffolk University Law School on Beacon Hill in Boston.

JM: Which was your major / minor in your undergrad education?

EB: What was my major what?

JM: What was your major / minor during your undergrad education?

EB: Oh ok, my major was in government – public policy was my focus and my thesis. I did a junior year abroad working in Washington DC on public – mainly health care public policy issues in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. It's been renamed – back then it was chaired by our Senator Edward Ted Kennedy. My minor was in music performance.

JM: Why did you minor in music and performance?

EB: I would have made it a major [laughs] if I'd been a better performer [laughs] and if I'd thought I could've made a living at it, but I don't think I had enough innate talent and I didn't think that I could make a full time living at it so law filled that gap.

VA: Did you always plan to become a lawyer?

EB: Yes definitely, from the time I was in elementary school.

JM: What kind of influenced your decision to be a lawyer like when you were in elementary school like what-what was around you that made you want to be a lawyer?

EB: Well my mother was a great debater, she was on the debate team in her high school and she was responsible for making me speak up for myself in a lot of different, you know, daily teaching moments. And I was afraid of blood so I couldn't go to medical school, but I think that helping people and being good at researching and debating and presenting arguments, those were skills I think I developed in elementary school and middle school. So, my mom was a great influence on me.

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VA: What was your influence to want to possibly do a major in music and eventually ending up doing a minor?

EB: I had a fantastic teacher named Miriam Jensen who is still the band director up at Wachusett, she auditioned me and moved me up to the honors band and kept challenging me to challenge people who are older than me for the next seat up I don't know if you know anything about band but you audition to get into the band and then you audition for each seat ultimately trying to get up to the first chair...

JM: Ok.

EB: The first chair is important because that's the person who is sort of the leader of the section and may get solos and things like that. So, she always challenged me to audition up so to speak. She also encouraged me to audition for outside groups like the McDonalds All American Band and I went to Chicago when I was a senior for a national concert band that was supported by the Navy at that point in time. [Vibrating cell phone] So, really it was her pushing me to try and excel in music when I applied for college. I really tried to identify the music programs and I would send audition tapes into the colleges with the hopes that one of teachers would want me as their student and I made a real connection with the flute professor at Smith College which I think gave me, you know, an additional leg up in terms of my application.

VA: If your mother was your base for majoring in law and your music professor during high school was your inspiration for minoring in music, did your father have any type of influence in your career.

EB: My father was the one who prepared me for college. He, from the time I was in the fourth grade and he realized that I had skills for academics, took me out – I'm sorry I'm crying – and purchased a desk for me. And we didn't have a lot of money, but he went out and bought me a brand new desk that I picked out because being a student was my only job. Excuse me, he encouraged me to look at Smith College. I wasn't looking at any other single-sex schools and he asked me to look at Smith College and took me around to all my college interviews and helped me prepare the tape, my audition tape, for all the schools. He's the one [who] went out and bought the equipment to be able to make a recording, I recorded a Mozart concerto and I played the flute part and then I learned the piano part which was condensed for an orchestra score and he recorded both parts. So, I accompanied myself on this audition tape. So my father was a huge contributor. Excuse me. Do people cry during these interviews?

JM: Yea, so what challenges did you face in school or did you face any challenges in school both high schools, colleges and middle school?

EB: I think probably my biggest challenge was in elementary school in trying to keep me where I needed to be. Let me see if I can sum this up. I think the teachers had a lot of trouble keeping

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the other kids just focused enough in order to be in school and, you know, I wanted more work and to learn more and to read more so I was actually picked out to be in a program for gifted students in Worcester inner city schools. At the time it was called peak, P-E-A-K I don't know if they still have that, but a group of us were picked to be in this group and we would come from all different schools and meet at a certain school and have special classes on, you know, art, music. We would go to the Worcester Art Museum. We would have special classes to keep us engaged. And then law school [laughs] was very difficult. I will not tell any lies about that. Law school, my first year of law school, the amount of work that was involved was incredible. I really wasn't prepared for how much work it would be and it was never ending. The amount of reading that we had to do was incredible so that was quite a challenge.

JM: Do you feel that all that work that you received in law school prepared you for your career as a lawyer

EB: Oh definitely, Suffolk Law School is a litigator's, trial attorney, school and prepared me very well to get right out there and practice.

VA: During your years at Smith College did you feel any pressure or competition with the other girls since it's an all girl school?

EB: Really no, my group of friends were in many different disciplines I had a friend who became an architect her major was in art and architecture, another friend biology and geology and chemi-bio chem., American studies, theater, me in government. So we all had different areas of study and there really wasn't any competition amongst the women. It was all your competition against yourself.

VA: You said that your father pushed you to look at the possibility of going to Smith College, what other options were you looking at-at the time

EB: At the time I was looking at basically small liberal arts colleges, Bates, Colgate, UMass Amherst, Bowdoin, those kinds of schools. So small liberal arts colleges, I think I applied to six schools.

JM: Total or just liberal arts?

EB: I applied to - I believe six schools total.

JM: Total ok, so going on to after you graduated and studied a career as lawyer , after you graduated did you imedi - did you immediately work as a lawyer or did you- or was there a different process- like a different path you took before you became a lawyer?

EB: No and I wish that I had taken a little bit of time off; my husband had three or four years in between school and law school. He really appreciated, you know, getting back to school and he

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had had a prior career, I had never worked full time for a living at the point that I graduated from law school. So, I went straight through school and then you graduate and then you take the bar exam and then you sit and wait for your exams to come so, then I started working...

JM: Ok so...

EB: ...soon after the bar results came through.

JM: So after the bar results came through and you started working, what law firms did you work in?

EB: I worked originally as a contract attorney for Warner and Stackpole in Boston [Massachusetts], they were in the middle of doing a large piece of litigation involving a toxic tort much like – have you read or seen the movie A Civil Action with John Travolta?

JM: Mhmm-mhm

EB: It was a case kind of like that, a really big toxic tort case. So I worked as a contract attorney for Warner and Stackpole for about I think six months and then I got my first full time attorney position working for a small firm in Boston [Massachusetts] called Hogan, Roache and Malone. And they did lots of different things and it was a really exciting job and I would consider Bill Hogan as a mentor to my young career in terms of what kind of work I wanted to do and he gave me a lot of exposure to clients and to go to court very early on and argue cases.

JM: Ok, so you said you had a mentor and he helped you a lot, did you have any mentors before him or no?

EB: I would consider my college advisor Don (Bomer??) as a mentor he encouraged me to apply for the junior year abroad program that I told you a little about down in Washington DC and also helped me through the process of picking law schools and figuring out what kind of lawyer I wanted to be and what I wanted to do with a law degree. It very important when you're going to law school to decide where you want to be ultimately because you – for example, if you go to law school down in Louisiana they have a very different set of laws that they study down there, I think they're called the Napoleonic laws there based on a different common law than most of the other states study and it's also very important to go to school in a state where you want to live ultimately because you have to take multiple bars. There's very little reciprocity between states...

JM: Mhmm-hmm

EB: When you're a young lawyer sometimes after five or ten years of practice you can waive into other states, but he really walked me through that process of negotiating where to go to school and what I ultimately wanted to do with a law degree.

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JM: Ok.

VA: During the few jobs before you came to the job you have now; did you gain any abilities that helped you throughout your career?

EB: Definitely, negotiation is something that they don't really teach you in law school and it's a very useful skill as you might imagine [laughs] in all kinds of different situations including in my job and at home. Trying to negotiate with a ten year old about whether to stay up ten more minutes or not is becoming very useful. So, I learned a lot of negotiation skills at some of my prior jobs that has served me very well. Also the ability to manage time, you know, that's something you've got to be able to do in your position no matter what...

JM: Yea.

EB: ...you choose later on and so being accountable for time and to know when to stop working on something or when to stop a conference with a client when it no longer is necessarily, you know, useful productive information. Those are a couple skills I learned at jobs up until this point.

JM: Ok, how did you come to establish your own law firm?

EB: Well, this is one aspect that I think being a women, it doesn't help. I don't know if I mean it exactly that way. I didn't say it very artfully, but going out into business for yourself as a women I think is more difficult than it is for a man. I think a lot of women feel like they need to work for a government agency or a firm or a non-profit. There's some sort of safety in working for others, but when you work for yourself, you know, you have to be the administrator, you need to pay the taxes, you need to be an employer, you need to order the office supplies, be the office manager, and do all of the marketing and then service your clients, get to court on time. I got to a point in my career where I thought I wasn't going to progress any further in terms of responsibility and so this was the next logical step, but I think that I hesitated for too long – several years before I made that jump to working for myself. I think mainly because my children were young, health insurance – I was the provider, and aversion to risk, but I'm really glad that I did make the leap and I should've done it years prior to when I did.

VA: Does your husband work as a lawyer too?

EB: He does.

VA: You graduated before him?

EB: We graduated together actually, same year.

VA: Ok.

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EB: Same day.

JM: You guys attended the same college?

EB: Not the same college but the same law school.

JM: Law school, ok, go to the next page, what-what does being a lawyer mean to you? Like what-like what has it done for you in your life specifically-like...?

EB: It's given me so much insight into other people's problems. I started off in my early career doing mostly business litigation and dealing with contracts and things like that. Right now I also take, you know, in addition to continuing on that type of law I do a lot of work with people with mental health issues. I do work in the juvenile court representing families who are going through care and protection proceedings where children are taken away temporarily or permanently and it never ceases to amaze me that if I think I have any problems, the problems of some of my clients are way worse, you know, in terms of mental health issues or substance abuse or poverty or just an inability to parent. There's so many problems out there that I see as a lawyer and I see my role as trying to help people through those issues and to counsel them through those issues. So I mean whenever I think I've got problems I just think about some of my clients who may be committed in a state hospital for mental health reasons or a client who's child was recently taken by the Department of Children and Families who are abused or neglected. I think it's given me a lot of insight into how lucky I am to have my health and my family.

VA: Do you believe you have affected the Worcester [Massachusetts] community or in this case the Holden [Massachusetts] community through your career?

EB: I think so. I have provided a lot of pro bono hours, volunteering down at the Probate and Family Court trying to help parties fill out their paperwork and counsel them as to what needs to be done. I volunteer for the Worcester County Bar Association, I am on the board of the Elder Services of Worcester Area, which helps elders stay at home longer and provide services in their homes. So, I have a lot of volunteer activities and I hope that I have helped families and individuals and organizations as well. That's very important to me, to give back to the community.

VA: How long have you been involved in community service? Or when did you start showing interest in volunteer work, community service?

EB: I mean, I think in high school I was a part of the National Honor Society and we had a community service aspect to that and when I was in CCD at St. Mary's, you know we had a community aspect to that, but I think in terms in my adult life, when I went out on my own and opened my own firm in September of 2010, I gained the freedom to volunteer my time at places,

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whereas before that I worked at a firm that made it – it was difficult. So, I would say for the past three or four years. It's become a bigger part of my everyday life.

VA: What are your primary responsibilities in terms of housework?

EB: Grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, and overseeing the children a lot of the time. Like I said before, my husband is a very modern husband in terms of childcare, he was right there changing the dippers with me. [Laughs] He, unfortunately, he owns the laundry situation. So yeah, we share the household responsibilities.

VA: Has your career affected your home environment?

EB: Yes there are sometimes when I am in trial where I am just not there. Sometimes weekends, sometimes I have to take phone calls late at night, but I think, for the most part, I am very present for my children and my husband.

[All laugh]

JM: Do you think you live a well-balanced life in terms of family, work, and personal interests?

EB: I wish I had more personal time, I would love to pick up music again, but there are only so many hours in the day. [All laugh] But I think overall I have a good balance between work and home. And we do travel, you know, quite a bit, and we do a lot of recreational activities as a family. I do wish I had a more time for my own personal interests, but I am sure as the children get older I'll have more time later on. [Laughs]

JM: As the children get older you'll have more time; do you think that when you do have more time would you go back into music?

EB: Definitely. I think I will try and take lessons again and get back to the point where I was probably at my peak in college and then play in some sort of community band or orchestra. That would be my dream. [All laugh] My dream when I was in high school was to be a lawyer and play for the Boston Symphony Orchestra. That didn't exactly pan out, but...

JM: There is still time.

EB: There's still time.

[All laugh]

VA: You mentioned that your mother and father influenced you in your decision and your career path; do you believe you and your husband will influence your children in their decisions and career path?

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EB: Yes. I am pushing for Smith College; my husband is pushing for Oxford. [Laughs] But no, I think definitely we will, together, foster whatever interests the kids have and help them identify places where that can grow. Definitely.

JM: Do you consider yourself active politically? I know you mentioned you said you were a Democrat, but other than being a democrat how active are you politically?

EB: Not really, I vote. [All laugh] I have contributed to campaigns in the past. I would love to be more active; I do follow the policies that I have been very interested in since my college days. Health care policies, welfare policies, gun policy. I try to follow those. But I just don't really have time to be more active; I'm not a part of any particular organization, go to rallies, or anything like that. I don't really do any of that.

VA: You said you participate in several community work service and volunteer work, and you mentioned the elderly, you help the elderly, what other organizations have you volunteered or currently volunteer?

EB: I am a member of the Holden Recreation Committee, which deals with recreational opportunities like our pools, art classes, and playgrounds for the children and things like that. I am part of the Worcester County Bar Association and I chair the Women's Lawyer Committee, which deals with trying to advance women in law and address whatever practice issues that they have and provide educational opportunities as well. I also co-chair the Juvenile Court Committee for the Bar Association, which deals with, again, juvenile court issues, policies, changes in the law, educational opportunities. I volunteer as a lawyer for a day at Worcester Probate and Family Court once a month, for five or six hours at a time, helping people who can't afford a lawyer, to walk them through the process, and fill out their forms and trying to help them navigate the process. I think that's enough.

[All laugh]

VA: So you like every type of community service, you don't have specific tastes? Like some people like to volunteer for the elderly and dislike like volunteering with small children. [Laughs] But you enjoy all aspects of community service?

EB: I would say so. I would say so.

JM: Do you involve your children in volunteering for the community or not?

EB: We try to. We took them to a meal that the Worcester County Bar Association puts on once a month at the Mustard Seed down at Piedmont St. in Worcester [Massachusetts]. We took them, I think it was during the summer, down to help feed the poor, so they've done that. They have, in the past, not this past holiday season, but in prior holiday seasons, money that they receive from

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family members, we've encouraged them to donate that to a charity of their choice, which was one year an animal shelter. So we try to instill, you know, charitable community...

VA: Values?

EB: Values and that you're just not a child and you have your own world of school, home, parents, friends. That there is more out there beyond just their everyday world so they aren't completely cloistered. And we travel, and when we travel we, you know, try not to go just to the tourists spots, we try to show them what a place is really like. My husband had been to Africa and he can't wait to bring them, when they're old enough, to be able to take the malaria drugs, things like that, to be able to show them a really different world. Europe and Australia aren't really all that different than the United States. He's really excited to show them a completely different world from us.

JM: You said your husband went to Africa, have you ever been to Africa or any other country on your own to see the differences?

EB: I haven't been to Africa yet, but my college roommate, she builds schools in Africa, she's an architect, and so this August we are going to Africa together along with one or two college friends to see the school that she is building and we're doing some education for girls, because girls in Africa aren't encouraged to continue their education. A lot of times, my understanding is that in the culture down there that the school fees are very expensive comparatively and that the families will often have so many discretionary income to pay for school fees so a lot of the times the boys get to go to school and the girls have to stop their education around grade five, six, seven. So were going down there in August to sort of a multidisciplinary education focus for girls on what other opportunities are out there in terms of continuing on your education, why should you do that, how does it open doors, what other places could you go, could you go to the United States for college, you know.

JM: Very interesting.

EB: It will be interesting! I can't wait!

VA: What does the work consist of within the organizations you are a part of?

EB: Say that again.

VA: What does your work consist of within the organizations you are a part of?

EB: For the Elder Services of Worcester Area, I am the secretary so I am on the executive committee, which deals with salary issues and financial issues, but as a general member of that board we deal with making sure that the programs are meeting the needs of the elderly and the community. The organization is mainly trying to assist frail elders to stay at home rather than go

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to a skilled nursing facility, to provide services like in home nursing care, medication management, money management, meals, nutrition, all kinds of things. So we oversee the programs the staffing and trying to work with the government in terms of funding all of the programs, which is half the battle. The Bar Association position involve being liaison between the Bar Association and the attorneys who are practicing in a particular court, to resolve any practical issues that come about, and to educate the attorneys on changes in law, policy, or practice on how the courts conduct their business. The Holden Recreation Committee basically oversees just the recreation director, making sure that the programs are providing adequate recreational opportunities to, you know, the children and adults in the community. Yeah, so mainly advisory, every once in a while I am asked to look at a legal issue a group's bylaws or the articles of the organization, sort of the constitution of the framework by which the organization runs, but mainly it's just overseeing and advisory positions.

JM: What would you consider the groups' major accomplishments, or the associations you're associated with, what are their major accomplishments you would say?

EB: I think one of the major accomplishments of Elder Services of Worcester area, recently is being picked to assist elders after an acute hospitalization; we're involved in a program called Coleman Coaching. What was happening was that a lot of elderly people, they're in the hospital for some sort of acute medical problem, and as they're being discharged the doctors or nurses are giving them instructions with some information about their medication and they go on their way, they get home, they don't follow their medication regime or the doctors' orders after leaving the hospital, and are soon readmitted for a problem. They're not taking their medication properly, they're not watching the signs and symptoms that the doctors and nurses to look for, swelling, dizziness, nausea, those kinds of things. And they're being readmitted very quickly. Medicare, Medicaid for, you know, the federal government are trying to cut down on readmissions and so Elder Services is being involved in coaching people, doing home visits once an elderly patient gets home, to assist them with: do you understand your medication, who is here to help support you, make sure you get your medication at the correct time, get your prescription filled again, make a follow-up appointment with your primary care physician, and what are you going to do if these signs and symptoms arise, what is your plan of action? So that's one, you know, a huge accomplishment that Elder Services has recently made, but you know every day they are out there doing meals on wheels and giving nutrition on elderly in their counsel on aging, senior centers, and you know every day they are doing such great work making sure that people who sometimes have no one else, have someone to look in on them, during snowstorms, power outage. So I mean I think what elder services does is really amazing.

JM: Just to go into religion, what has religion played a role in your life, before that, what religion do you associate yourself with?

EB: Well I was raised Roman Catholic; I'm not practicing right now.

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[Laughs]

JM: So basically religion hasn't played much of a role in your life? [Laughs]

EB: I would say that. [Phone rings]

VA: Do you consider politics and volunteer work to influence your identity?

EB: Definitely volunteer work is part of who I am and I think it's important that if you have the time and the abilities that everyone should participate in community affairs. Politics, I don't really think that that identifies, I don't really have an identifying, it doesn't really have an identifying role in my life currently. Prior, when I was in college, you know I worked on Capitol Hill, I worked in the Senate, it was during the election of Bill Clinton, it was a very exciting time. Then, it defined my entire being, where I lived, I didn't go to – I took one class, as part of the junior year down there, but the bulk of my responsibilities was working in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee dealing with hearings, transcripts, policy, meetings between senators, you know, all kinds of things. So then it played a huge role in my life. Now, not so much. But I think that is typical of people's experiences. When you're young, you know, that's when you have a lot of time to pay attention to that, and as you go older things shift.

JM: So now onto health, has any health issue impacted your life, or the life of those in your family?

EB: I have been very lucky and I've been healthy my whole life. My family, my immediate family has been healthy their whole lives, my children and husband very very healthy. I have an aunt who is sick right now and that, you know, it stinks...

JM: I'm sorry to hear that.

EB: but, you know, health has been – I have no complaints, I have been very, very lucky to have been so healthy, but I also think that we have a great hospital system here in Central Massachusetts and then Boston [Massachusetts] to draw upon, so that we are in terms of geographic were in a very good place to be for that.

VA: Earlier you mentioned health care, so what are your experiences in accessing quality, affordable healthcare?

EB: Like I said, I really have not had the need, other than pregnancies, to be under the care of a doctor. I have no problems accessing fantastic OBGYN services and have had very good prenatal care, very good deliveries, excellent doctor services at, you know, both births of my children and great hospital experiences, but you know we have very good health insurance and so we haven't had any problems whatsoever, but I know that a lot of people struggle.

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VA: Whose health are you responsible for besides your own?

EB: My children's.

JM: How do you and your husband manage each other's priorities in order to take care of each other's health and your children's health?

EB: I would say that I am primarily responsible for the children's health; he certainly is there if I have something already scheduled. For example, he just took my son to see a specialist two weeks ago. So we certainly share the responsibilities, but I am primarily the one making the appointments, getting the kids to the appointments, following up on the doctor's recommendations and care, but certainly it's just a matter of scheduling. I work here in Holden [Massachusetts], the kids are in Holden, and our house is in Holden, so by virtue of that I get the call from the school nurse. He works in Worcester and his main office is down at Brockton [Massachusetts], so by virtue of geographic location, I am generally the one overseeing their health. And then, you know, he's English so he has a very different idea of what healthcare should look like, what health care policy should look like versus the U.S. He would like to see a single-payer system, [laughs] like in England.

JM: How have all the aspects that compose your life affected or changed your identity?

EB: How have all the aspects of my life changed my identity?

JM: Yeah, affected or changed it.

VA: You said that when you were young the political aspect affected your identity, it was a part of it, and now it's not. So how have all of the other aspects in your life since your were a child, high school, college, until now, changed who you are as a person?

EB: Hmm...

JM: Or would you rather say you really haven't changed? [Laugh]

EB: Well, I think marrying someone who wasn't born and raised in the United States has certainly widened my view of what role the U.S. plays in the world and how introspective Americans are. The way that things are portrayed in the media are so geared towards American stories and things like that, versus how things are handled in England, you know, the news is much more geared towards what's going on in the world. So I think that marrying him has certainly changed my perspective, but I think I'm the same person.

[All laugh]

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JM: Ok, so I think were going to the conclusion of our interview. We're just gonna ask you these last few questions. Do you consider any of your aspects more important than the rest, like you say you volunteer...

VA: community service...

JM: Your job. Do you consider anything more important, if so what are they? Or has there ever been a time in your life that you considered one more important than the other?

EB: I mean, my priority right now is taking care of my family. Work and community service where I can fit it in. [Laughs] Yeah, I mean, I think family life has changed me. It just takes over all of your time. It takes a lot of time, especially trying to raise children now a days. We try to – we limit screen time, we really try to encourage reading and academics and less music or iPods or electronic devices. We really encourage getting outside, skiing, cross country skiing, biking, hiking, snowshoeing, so the family life is the most important aspect, I think in my life right now. And obviously that has changed since before children.

VA: So we are working to record women's history because in the past it has been somewhat neglected, so what do you believe we should include to represent women today?

EB: I think that I have a very modern life in terms of balancing advance degree and a highly responsible job for other people's lives, with family, with recreation, and, you know, women had to fight for so many advances and I think that I have a very good life in terms of all the opportunities that I have. And I think its really important to thank the people who came before us for all of those opportunities because now I don't even have to think about it. I am not someone who's unusual. This is, you know, typical life right now, that you can be a lawyer, you have an advance degree, you can have a family, you can have a partner who shares the household and childbearing responsibilities with you. So I think that's really important that we've come a long way, I'm sure that there's a lot of other issues that could be improved, but I'm very thankful. I went to the 100-year celebration of the event in Worcester. Jill Ker Conway, who was the president of Smith College, was the speaker and it was a really exciting event. It was a really exciting event. I don't know how many years ago that was now. [All laugh] Maybe six or seven, the 100-year anniversary of the first National Convention. [150th anniversary of the 1850 first National Woman's Rights Convention]

JM: Maybe you're right, it's been six or seven, I wanna say that, but I feel it can be a little less than that.

EB: Seven years, maybe ten years ago, you're right.

VA: Two more questions. How do you think written records of modern women's history can influence future generations?

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EB: Say it again.

VA: How do you think written records of modern women's history can influence future generations?

EB: Oh, for, you know, having an understanding of what life was like before. Definitely, so that there's gratitude and so that there's never any complacency in letting laws change in any issue that affects women's life, in keeping progress moving forward rather than just being complacent.

JM: Going back to challenges you have faced in your life quickly, has anyone ever challenged you based on your identity?

EB: Not really in a way that I could recognize, I'm sure that being down at the courthouse there is still a lot of male judges, male lawyers. So never, you know, to my face, 'you're a woman, you shouldn't be in this courtroom,' but I'm sure that there's been...

VA: Prejudice?

EB: Prejudices, but not necessarily that I'm aware of.

JM: So last question, so it's never really led you into any conflict with others because you defined yourself as a woman in the law career?

EB: No, I feel really accepted, and I've never had anyone comment on gender, I'm sure like to my face. [All laugh] No, I'm sure that again there have been side comments, but never anything...

VA: Completely disrespectful

EB: Yeah, right.

JM: Well we wanna thank you again for your time.

EB: My pleasure.

JM: We appreciate it.

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