

Interviewee: Nancy Crimmin
Interviewers: Kristie Caminero, Iyla Driggs, and Suzanne Pepe
Date: October 13, 2016
Place: Worcester, Massachusetts
Transcribers: Kristie Caminero, Iyla Driggs, and Suzanne Pepe



Overseen by Dr. Carl Robert Keyes and Dr. Arlene Vadum, Assumption College

Nancy Crimmin was born in Canton, Massachusetts, in 1967 and went to Fontbonne Academy in Milton. Nancy came to Worcester to start a new job at Assumption College where she worked her way up from Resident Director to the Dean before leaving in 2012 to pursue a career at Becker College. She is currently Senior Vice President and Chief Academic and Student Affairs Officer. Nancy has worked at and attended several different colleges including Curry College, Russell Sage, Johnson and Wales, Alverno, and Springfield College and says she knew she was interested in working at a college from the very beginning. When asked about the city of Worcester, Nancy says she believes the city has been revitalized in several areas but believes the public schools could use a little more attention. Nancy is a mother of two boys and discusses the difficulties of raising a special needs child in the public school system, and wishes there were more support programs for special needs children and their parents. Nancy attended an all-girls high school and an all-girls college and, in this interview, expresses the importance of female mentors for young women.

SP: So, I'll read the statement. We are creating a city-wide 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 politics or community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences with Becker College. Thank you for your help with this important project. So now if we could just have your vocal permission to record you.

NC: Yes.

SP: Thank you. So we'll start off with... what's your full name including both married name and maiden name?

NC: Nancy Papagno Crimmin.

SP: Where were you – when were you born?

NC: October 6th, 1967.

SP: Have you ever married?

NC: Yes.

SP: What is the name of your husband?

NC: William.

SP: Do you have children?

NC: Yes, two.

SP: What are their names?

NC: Patrick is 20 and Jonathan is 19.

SP: Do you have grandchildren?

NC: No.

SP: Okay. [laughs] So what cultures or ethnicities do you identify with?

NC: Italian.

KC: What culture – oh – tell me about your parents.

NC: My parents... so both parents are first-generation American. Both of their parents – so both sets of grandparents immigrated here from Italy. They were both born here. My father worked in the shipyards in Quincy before he went into the military and worked as an architect. He passed away in 1987. And my mother worked in accounting until she had kids, stopped working for a long time until I got to high school and then went back into accounting. She retired probably ten years ago. She's 85. She still lives in the same house, so...

KC: Where have you lived during your life?

NC: So I was born in Canton, Massachusetts, lived there until 1988. I moved to Wisconsin – Milwaukee, Wisconsin for three years for a job. So I lived there for three then I came back. I lived in Springfield, Massachusetts for two years when I got my master's degree and then I moved here to Worcester. So, that was August of '92 I think. I forgot the date.

KC: What was your neighborhood like generally? Like in your childhood.

NC: It still is [laughs]. My mother still lives there. So, pretty middle class, Catholic – Irish, Catholic, Italian and Jewish all on one street. Everybody had many, many children except for us. One house on one side of me had 16. The other side of us had nine. The other house that was in front of us had seven and we had two. [laughs]

SP: [whispers] So we already asked that, you can go to number 10.

KC: Where do you live in the city now? And have you lived in multiple areas like would you explain...

NC: Where I live in what city now?

KC: Yeah recently, now.

NC: I live here in Worcester, yep, since '92.

ID: What made you come to Worcester?

NC: What made me come? I got a job.

SP: Have you lived in the same area in Worcester the whole time or?

NC: Generally, yes. I lived here. On campus [at Assumption College]

SP: Oh.

NC: Yeah, for 20 years.

SP: Oh, okay.

NC: So I lived in Salisbury [Hall]. I lived in Worcester [Hall].

KC: That's my building.

NC: Right? And then I moved to 4A for a long time. And then I moved to Nelson Place right behind the Sixes [toenhouse]? On the – there's two houses? Mine's the second one. Well it was. Now it's...

SP: You lived here for work? Or for school?

NC: I worked here. No, I worked here. I worked at Assumption in general. I came here in '92 because I got a job at Assumption.

KC: Oh...

NC: I was an RD [Resident Director]. Then I became the director of Res Life. Ted Zito? [Director of Residential Life]

All: Mhmm.

NC: Yep, he was one of my students. Then I became the Dean. Conway Campbell? [Dean of Campus Life] Okay I hired him. And then I stayed as the Dean for 10 years and then I left in 2012.

SP: Oh wow [laughs].

KC: So you were here when Dean Morrison, Dean Knowlton...

NC: Jenny and Eloise, yep.

KC: Going to keep going with the same... about Worcester. Do you have any other family members in the area?

NC: My husband's family. He grew up in Shrewsbury so he has a brother that lives in Worcester and then his other two brothers moved away recently.

KC: What challenges do you think the city still faces? What would you change about the city?

NC: I think the public school system continuously needs work. Funding, teacher education, special education and special services for students with disabilities, and advocacy for families to work with the school system is something that I see is in need of a lot of support.

ID: What changes have you seen in Worcester over time since you've come here?

NC: The economy. I think that when I first came here, it was – everything was a lot less expensive. It was a long time ago now. You know, you could buy a house and for like 150, 190,000 and now real estate has gone through the roof. You can't do that anymore. But the build up of businesses – especially hospitality, like hotels and restaurants, that's been incredible. Like all of Shrewsbury Street, all the hotels in the area, hardly any of them were here. Things have changed over a couple times, even the grocery stores changed. Just a nice revitalization of some parts of the city and, of course, in other parts of the city there hasn't been.

ID: Was it a big college town when you first moved here as well?

NC: Yes, but we didn't call it that. That really didn't come out until probably the late 90's. People started using that – you know, "Worcester's a college town," because what they wanted

was the college students to stay in Worcester. They call it “brain drain.” You educate the students and then they were all leaving. They were going to work in Boston or New York or Connecticut or the West Coast right? They weren’t staying in Worcester and so they weren’t helping the economy of Worcester. So there was a big push to say “Okay we’re a college town but we really want you to stay.”

ID: Do you remember what colleges were here first before you kind of branched out more?

NC: No they were all here when I got here.

ID: Oh, okay.

NC: There’s been some changes to them like Becker [College], the institution I’m at now, was a two-year institution, now its four. It’s been four since the 80’s. But no all the other schools have been here.

ID: What distinct characteristics make city the place that it is?

NC: I think all the neighborhoods. You know, it’s hard when you move here because you have to figure out what the townies are saying because they talk about – they grew up in, you know, Greendale. I thought Greendale was as separate town – it’s not. I live in the Greendale section of Worcester. There’s Westwood Hills – this is Westwood Hills right; Salisbury Street is Westwood Hills. Nelson Place is Greendale. So either side of the campus... the seven hills of Worcester – they talk about – if you were born and raised in Worcester, you know everybody and they know you. Where’d you go to high school? You’re always associated with where you went to high school. So when I moved here – I’m an outsider right? So, trying to break into that? Even as an adult, it’s very difficult. People say it all the time, too, you can’t break into that. There’s a lot of – it’s very cliquey? It’s a big city but it’s kind of small. [whispers] Everybody knows everybody. They really do it’s kind of weird to be honest with you.

ID: What do you think women’s experiences in Worcester have been generally?

NC: In terms of anything specifically or...

SP: Yeah that’s kind of vague.

KC: Like their part in Worcester, like proactive role...

NC: Oh, okay. I mean I think we’ve been pretty active – I think women have been pretty active in government. I know that we have a lot of professionals in Worcester so there’s a lot of areas where lawyers and doctors and the hospitals so I think women have had a big place in those fields here in the city. [whispers] I’m trying to think now... [pause] Boards. Girls Inc. has become very popular in the city. It always was but it’s become very popular and the women’s

initiative to help the girls of the city of Worcester has become very popular too. Which does great work for inner-city girls. And that's a huge group of women in the city that work on that project. So I think there's a- I think there's been a lot of emphasis on women helping girls in the city of Worcester that might make us a little unique.

ID: Can you think of a field that we could use more women in in the city?

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NC: Hmm that's a good question. [pauses]

ID: Because you did talk about how the education system could use more work.

NC: Well, I think, traditionally, that's a pretty – K through 12, is traditionally, no matter where you go, more female. We probably could use more males, K through 12. So I don't necessarily think that's an area. Even in the colleges now we have [whispers] one... two... two female presidents? [pause] I think? Two female presidents now? Probably could use a couple more. So education I don't think is the issue. Maybe law enforcement. I don't know if we have any upper-level law enforcement who are women. Including the DA's office. I know we have some assistant DA's that are but... upper levels...

ID: Could you talk about your education like where did you go, did you attend school?

NC: I went to Catholic school – first through eighth – in Canton where I grew up – Saint John's Church... School. You know, next to each other. You start with 40 kids you graduate with 40 kids right? Uniforms, whole nine yards. I went to Fontbonne Academy in Milton Mass. I don't know if any of you are from that side of the city...

ID: I'm from Boston.

NC: You're from Boston? So I went to Fontbonne's – all girl's high school, small, outside of the city. I went to Russell Sage College in Troy, New York which is a women's college. For two and a half years -- I transferred in the middle of my junior year. So January of my junior year I transferred to Stonehill [College] which is near where I grew up so I commuted for the last year and a half. Graduated from there. I worked for a while then I went back to school in May of '90 to Springfield College, got my Master's Degree in Counseling and Higher Ed. And then in '08, 2008 I think, I went back to school and got my doctorate at Johnson and Wales.

SP: So what were some challenges you faced when you were getting your education?

NC: [pauses] Nothing outrageous. I think going to a girl's high school then a women's college was really good for me, very empowering. Didn't – maybe I wasn't always the one to speak out in class so maybe that kind of gave me a chance to have a voice before I got to Stonehill where there were men in the class again. So I really enjoyed that aspect of it. Other than that I really

just think it was the challenge of going back to school two times after being out and the changes. Wasn't so much when I went for my master's because I'd only been out for three years at that point, but going back after 15 to get my doctorate, everything had changed. Now we had computers, we didn't have that. I did my master thesis on a typewriter. So, you know, you have digital databases in the library, I used the Dewey Decimal System and microfiche. I got my master's, came here, Dawn Thistle? Director of the Library and IT? I sat with her and she taught me how to use all the digital databases online, I had no clue how to – at that point we got email here in '95 maybe is when we started using email on campus. And then it just grew from there but – so that was '95 and then I went back to school in 2008 so obviously things had changed but I hadn't been to school so that was a huge adjustment for me. The digital age, mostly research, made typing really easy. Doing your dissertation on a computer is much easier than a typewriter where you make a mistake, you make a mistake what happens? It throws everything off. Mine had the corrector tape? Did you ever see one of those? The corrector tape – So if you were on the same line you could backspace and it whites – it did white out so you could correct it but if you were on a different line [laughs] you couldn't do that. Right.

SP: So what support networks did you have while you were in school?

NC: Well, definitely for my doctorate, I mean I had two small children so my husband and my mom would come out because I went to school on the weekends, every other weekend for two years. So my mom would come out every other weekend and help my husband with the kids.

SP: Every other weekend for school?

NC: Every other weekend, yep.

SP: So how long did that... take?

NC: From start to finish? 26 months.

SP: Oh, wow.

NC: Yeah pretty quick. Because I did it full-time, straight through. I didn't take any breaks or summers off I just went straight through.

SP: So, was it like all day, all weekend?

NC: Friday night – Friday I would leave here, three? Three-ish maybe? Two thirty, three o'clock? Get down there, because I was going down to Providence so traffic, whatever. I had five to ten every other Friday and 8:30 to five every other Saturday.

SP: So, Johnson and Wales, right?

NC: Yep.

KC: In the work area, what was your first job?

NC: My first job out of college I was assistant to the registrar at Curry College in Milton.

KC: What other jobs have you had and what do you do now?

NC: Okay, so, after Curry, this is easy, I went to Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin which is an all-women's college and I started out doing transfer credit evaluation for students who were transferring in right? And then I moved into academic advising which I did for a year and a half and then I moved into admissions and I did a little bit of admissions counseling work. Quit that, went to Springfield [College] for my masters and while I was in Springfield I worked at student activities for two years and I did an internship in the Dean's office. And then I came here so I was an RD for a year. I was the assistant director of res life for a year and a half. I was the director of Res Life for almost seven, and then I was the dean of campus life for ten.

SP: So did you know you wanted to work at colleges, I mean you started off at Curry...

NC: Yes.

SP: Sounds like a lot of experience with colleges did you...

NC: Yes, when I was at Russell Sage College I changed my major five times my freshman year, I really wasn't sure what I wanted. I went in with one thing and changed to something else and just kept changing until I stumbled on Psychology and then I sat in front of my academic advisor, who was a pretty cool guy, and I said, "I think I want to do what you're doing." And that's kind of unusual – it was unusual back then, now student affairs is a profession people recognize as you can get involved with colleges and go on and do this as a career. You can be in orientation, you can be in student activities, you can be in res life. You can do Alumni and Admissions; people didn't really think that before but now we encourage it. So yes, I did know before I graduated I wanted to work on a college campus. Wasn't really sure – I thought Admissions was pretty cool because you got to travel, and then I did it. It's really hard, really hard to travel. We didn't have GPS's or cell phones so we were using maps and stopping to use payphones when we got lost. Yeah it was awful.

KC: The work that you have now, what does it mean to you?

NC: So now I work – I left here and I went to be the Vice President of Student Affairs at Becker College in August of 2012 and then in January I was promoted to Senior Vice President and then in May my job changed to Senior VP Chief Academic and Student Affairs Officer so we've combined Academics and Student Affairs and Lou Carroll-Keeley [vice-president at Assumption College]? Those two positions is what I have now.

KC: What were – or are, your primary responsibilities in terms of housework and childcare?

NC: We're pretty good about splitting it, I'm very lucky my husband's mother was very good with him and taught him well and he's always been very good with that. Our kids are very close together they're only 14 months apart and my older son has a lot of disabilities so he required a lot of care. So we had to really work cooperatively and we still do that. He does most of the laundry [laughs]. I learned fast. So if you do the laundry and he doesn't like the way it was done he says I didn't do it right so then I say, "You have to do it." So he does the laundry.

KC: How have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles, and interests in your life?

NC: [coughs] Everything really in my adult life revolved around - revolves around family and work. So those are the priorities family first, then work.

KC: What do you think are the pros and cons of the path you have chosen?

NC: My positions have been pretty demanding. I became the director of Res Life here when Assumption was a very different place with a different type of student and a different mentality. So academics wasn't the main reason why people were here, so it was a very busy and demanding place. So long hours [pause] a lot of discipline [pause] a lot of, really, negativity.

KC: When you say academics wasn't, like, the priority here, like, can you, like, go further in that like how?

NC: People were here to party.

KC: That was it?

SP: When was this? Like...

NC: In the 90's, prior to my arrival.

SP: Yeah.

NC: And when I got here, took us a long time to [pause] change that mentality.

SP: So did you see change over time?

NC: Oh God yes!

SP: In the 90's to 2012.

NC: Oh, yes.

KC: We can see the change here. [laughs]

SP: Yeah.

NC: Absolutely I mean that's what the president at the time said was my primary job and I was not well liked.

SP: Oh, okay.

NC: If you could imagine.

SP: Yeah. [laughs]

NC: ...loved me. do a search for my name you'll see loved me.

SP: [laughs] I know.

KC: This is not considered a party school; it's more academics.

NC: I know, I know.

KC: You were part of that.

SP: A lot of work I bet.

KC: Yeah.

NC: A lot of work, a lot of work and [pause] like I said it wasn't positive work. There wasn't a lot of positive that came with it until [pause] you know until I became the Dean and then - by then things had pretty much settled down but it was pretty negative for a long time. SGA [Student Government Association] [huffs].

SP: Student government.

ID: Do you remember the first plan that you guys kind of like put together to tackle one of the main problems?

KC: Yeah, like how do you...

NC: The first thing was getting the right staff.

NC: That took a long time first of all I had to learn how to be a director. I had to learn how to be a boss. And I, because I had never been a boss before and all of a sudden I had this big job with like 10 people in it.

SP: With authority and...

NC: First I was their friend then I was their boss so that didn't go over very well so I had staff issues that I had to deal with and then I had student issues to deal with. Every weekend the 5's the 6's, the Hill, just a mess, just a mess. Worcester, Wachusett - a mess. We built the LLC, [Living Learning Center] that was our first building that I built and then Plough, South, West, those came right after so LLC was first then I think it was Plough, and West—no West is in the middle. Plough and South because it used to be North then they changed it to Plough. So Plough and South and West came last, that was the one in the middle, so that was four buildings in five years.

ID: So considering that this is a Catholic school that didn't really change like the environment for students at all [pause] in any way?

NC: Not at that time no. Campus ministry was active, but not like it is now. Much much different now, much more active, much more part of the community, much more part of the fabric, much well respected. Campus Ministry was a certain group of students back then that did that and that was it.

KC: Oh, now it's wide open for like more people.

NC: Yeah, absolutely, right.

KC: This is deeper like into your life but...

NC: Oh! And we needed those buildings by the way because we had no housing.

ID: Wow...

SP: Yeah that's so...

NC: We were bursting at the seams.

KC: I imagine without having the LLC, South, West, and North which is now Plough.

NC: Do you guys call it Plough? Or do you call it North?

KC: No, North.

ID: We call it North, yeah.

NC: You call it North?

KC: North, South, and West.

NC: Really? But they changed the name to Plough so now it's back to North.

KC: It says North outside.

ID: No, it says Plough on the outside of it but the nickname is North.

KC: North...

NC: That's the original name.

ID: Right.

NC: What do you call the three places on the Hill? Not the townhouses. What do you call the three buildings on the Hill?

KC: The Hill? We...

ID: The Tees?

NC: Nope, behind the Tees.

KC: Oh! That's like Young and Hanrahan and Nault . We just call them that, up the Hill...

NC: Isn't that funny?

KC: Nault, Young, and Hanrahan.

ID: What was is called back then?

NC: A, B, and C.

ID: Wow.

NC: And it never changed . No matter how many years, the names were Nault, Hanrahan and Young which they always been. But when they were built they were A, B, and C, and that never changed the whole time I was here.

ID: Did you guys still call the Valley, the Valley?

NC: The Valley, yeah. 4's, 5's, 6's, yeah.

KC: Yeah, but we call them Hanrahan, Young, and Nault.

NC: Do they still say 5-men? 6-men [townhouses]?

KC: Yeah.

NC: Drives me insane.

SP: Yeah.

ID: [laughs]

KC: Which is like...

NC: Women live there too, people.

KC: Yeah. [laughs]

NC: I hated that!

KC: It's because like, the guys.

NC: I hated it, hated it.

KC: [laughs]

NC: One of my biggest pet peeves; 6-men, 5-men...

KC: And they still do that, the Valley is still the Valley.

NC: You need to change that 6-men 5-men please! The 4's, 5's, and 6's.

KC: But they're cute.

NC: There's more women down there than there are men.

KC: There are, the 5's have more.

ID: So was it, so where there more commuter students back then when you were here? And was it not 100% residential?

NC: You're still not 100% residential.

ID: Okay.

NC: You're probably about 90 something.

ID: Okay.

KC: Yeah, but we have commuters.

NC: And we've always been about 90 something, we're pretty - we? You hear that? So you've always been pretty high. [pauses]

SP: That was my reason for coming here.

KC: Yeah.

NC: Because it's- it's a pretty traditional liberal arts residential campus. So yeah, you've always been pretty high. There's been times where the residency has definitely dipped.

KC: There's still not enough space after you left like there's still freshman in West, in Worcester they have to put them in Worcester because they don't fit.

NC: That was a freshman building.

KC: And now it's like sophomores only.

NC: But you know that Salisbury and Worcester were all quads.

KC: Salisbury and Worcester were quads??

NC: All quads, I had I had juniors in Salisbury. Before the LLC.

KC: But does it fit?

NC: The LLC was built for juniors.

KC: Wow! Like I'm in Worcester I'm in Worcester, she's in...

ID: I'm in West.

SP: I'm in Sals. [Salisbury Hall]

ID: But Worcester, I mean West there are quads but Worcester are triples now.

KC: Yeah, but I'm in a triple but we're only two people.

NC: The reason why Salisbury and Worcester were all quads is because we didn't have enough space.

KC: They're the same building.

NC: Right.

KC: Like just outside.

NC: They're mirrored images of each other.

KC: Yup.

NC: Exactly. They were built right before I got here. Salisbury first then Worcester and then Wachusett right after that. And then and Wachusett was five. Is it still five?

ID: Yeah.

NC: Three and two it should never be five it should be two and two. But they...

KC: Some of them have two and two.

NC: Yeah. But [pauses] the reason why you don't have. Why do you think the reason you don't have quads? Now think when I left here we had.

KC: Because now we have more space to open up in the LLC and like South, West, and North?

NC: Space is exactly the same.

[pauses]

NC: You don't have anymore residential space then when I was here.

KC: Maybe like too many people in a room because parties maybe. No?

NC: You don't have the same number of students that I did, when I was here. You have less students now.

KC: It's not a party school.

NC: So that's why you don't have all quads because your occupancy has been reduced.

KC: Lowered even though they say it's like a lot this year.

NC: It's not.

KC: Compared to like...

NC: So take what you have now and add quads in Salisbury and Worcester.

KC: I'll be like [pause] like being bunked all the time.

NC: You should talk to Ted Zito sometime. He was a student here and then he never left. He has never left, so he's, he's seen a lot.

KC: Wow.

SP: So what was your reason for leaving and going to Becker?

NC: I wanted to be a Vice President.

NC: And Dr. WoodBrooks wasn't going anywhere.

SP: Yeah.

NC: So if I wanted to be a Vice President I had to move. Right? I didn't want to leave. I was married here. I was married in the chapel.

SP: Oh, really?

NC: On October 10th. Just had my anniversary.

SP: Oh, congratulations!

NC: Both my kids were baptized by Assumptionists in the chapel. So, I didn't wanna leave but if I wanted to move up...

KC: In like the buildings when you were here working did they have still the RAs, the same staff like doing like overnight staff and stuff.

NC: When I started we had probably 25....27 RAs, when I left we ended up with 54 I'm not sure what they have now.

KC: I'm not sure by number, but by building they have like four or three. Five.

NC: In Salisbury and Worcester they probably have two per floor.

KC: Yup, that's what we do have now.

NC: Yeah probably, most of the buildings have two. Nault, Hanrahan, and Young have one. The townhouses probably one for each.

KC: Yeah and there's an RD in each building.

NC: Yeah.

KC: Okay, going to the personal one. How do you feel about the personal choices you made in your life and do you have any regrets?

NC: I honestly don't have a lot of regrets. I think the biggest thing is probably because my job was so nuts. Always all of my jobs have always been crazy. I think if I could take back some time with my kids when they were babies, I would like that. But I think that's a common female, mommy issue.

KC: Other than that you've done, like you've accomplished a lot so from what I've heard in these couple of minutes like it's been a lot.

NC: Yeah [laughs]

KC: [whispers to Iyla] You can go, like, if you want.

ID: So I am going to move onto like community involvement and politics.

KC: Yup.

ID: So do you consider yourself like active politically?

KC: No I don't. I don't have time.

[laughter]

NC: I vote, certainly, and I educate myself on the issues and I vote in all the elections even the silly ones that nobody votes in. [coughs] But do I campaign for specific people? No. Do I stand on the corner and hold the signs? No. Do I have my opinions? Absolutely. But no.

ID: Have you been involved in any volunteer or community work?

NC: I did a lot of PTA stuff in the schools. My boys went through Nelson Place [School] which is in the back end behind the sixes.

KC: Your boys came here?

NC: Nope they went to Nelson Place. No, my my oldest doesn't go to college. He just finished high school in Special Ed. And my youngest is at Sienna College outside of Albany.

KC: That's a really good school too.

NC: It's just like here.

[laughter]

KC: I got accepted there and I wanted to go.

NC: Except their brick is red and yours is white, it's sexy!

[laughter]

NC: A little bit bigger. In fact my son got out of the car and he said, "Mom it's just like Assumption." I'm like, "I know honey, it is." Except they have Friars and we have Assumptionists. Same thing.

KC: It's a Catholic school?

[laughter]

NC: PTA, a lot of PTA work when the kids were school when the insiders would let me and, let's see, PTA work. I worked with the Women's Initiative. I've done Big Sister volunteer work in the past. Seven Hills Foundation for people with disabilities, and I've been on a board Jewish Family Services of MetroWest which is right down the street on Salisbury Street and their adoption part of their adoption [pause] they have different areas of that business they work with elders, they work with children, and they do adoption services and I worked with adoption services as a volunteer.

ID: You talked about two of your volunteer groups like that were related to like women. Did that - did you choose to do that like based off of your college experience at all?

NC: I did those. People reached out to me. But they involved mentorship and that is something I feel really strongly about. Working with students working with high school girls and mentorship. I think as women one of the most important things we can do for ourselves is to get a mentor or mentors for different areas of your life. They're not friends they're not your boss they're someone that you can go to who will give you honest and open feedback and listen to what you have to say and help guide you and whatever your questions are. So for me that's been extremely important in my career. To have female mentors. My first boss here was a male and he was incredible. But my mentors in all my work, professionally, have always been strong women.

KC: Did you have, while you were in college, like, other than your advisor, like, did you seek for more advice or...

NC: My Dean of Students was a woman, her name is Sheila Murphy and I'm still, I don't make a move without talking to her [pause] professionally.

KC: Wow.

ID: That's nice.

NC: I know. Even in May when they offered me my new job. She was the first phone call I made. And she's retired now. But...

KC: But still.

NC: Doesn't matter. Yeah. So mentorship for women I think is [pause] the most important thing you can do for yourself.

ID: Could you talk about like any major accomplishments that you went through with some of the groups the organizations that you worked with?

NC: I think we did a lot with fundraising for Jewish Family Services for the adopted. My oldest son is adopted so that kind of—if you see special needs and adoption are the two areas that I spent my time here in special needs and he's adopted so. You know you have a personal connection to something. So that's where I spent my time when I had time. So we did a lot of fundraising and awareness for JFS in terms of their adoption services because it's something they don't do as much of it here anymore. They do it more in Framingham [Massachusetts], in their office. But that was something that when my kids were little that we spent a lot of time with.

ID: What role has religion played in your life?

NC: I grew up in a very [pause] spiritual Catholic home. My mother still goes to church every day. She just came back from a retreat in Cleveland where she swears she saw the Blessed Mother in the sun.

[laughter]

NC: My brother and I are not going to tell her that she didn't. If she wants to say that she saw the Blessed Mother.

KC: Then she did.

NC: She's been to pilgrimages around the world. She's been to Medjugorje. She's been to Guadeloupe. She's been everywhere. Religion is huge, all of my aunts, my grandparents. The church was and is the central part of their lives, that's their social life. That's where - everything revolves around the church. Now for us it's a little bit different. We belong to St. George's on Brattalal St. Our kids although they didn't go to catholic school they went through CCD [Confraternity of Christian Doctrine], they received the sacraments. Except for my oldest he didn't want to do confirmation and I wasn't going to force him. Because that's a decision as an adult you have to make and he was not interested in going to classes or doing anything like that. He got kicked out of CCD when he was in second grade. He remembers that. So we got him through baptism and first communion. And then we told him he could choose and he chose not to do confirmation but my other son did.

ID: Do you guys celebrate religious holidays?

NC: Yep, yep. We celebrate Christmas and Easter. We do go to church or mass when we can. Not every day like my mom and not necessarily every Sunday but we do go.

KC: Because you said you were Italian as well. Do you celebrate the Three Kings?

NC: Yes we do and we do all the traditional things. It's changed since my grandparents died. It's gotten a little different. It's not as much as when I mean, I can tell you things from when I was younger.

KC: Yeah, the Three Kings is sometimes it's precise sometimes they like change it up. Like three presents nothing other than that.

NC: Yeah, the traditions revolve around religion and food. In my family that's the biggest thing, religion and food. So you know, you did certain things for certain holidays with certain foods at specific times. That's still true. Not as bad. It's not the same seven fish on Christmas Eve that we used to have. We got rid of the eel and the kind of stuff that our kids are like, "What are you doing mom?"

[laughter]

NC: So some things have changed. We used to go to sunrise mass on Easter Sunday and then you'd go for a special breakfast with special foods. And then you go visit the other side of the family and then you'd come back to this side of the family. Palm Sunday, big deal.

KC: No red meat, only fish and like...

NC: Palm Sunday's a very big deal still, drives my kids crazy. You have to go to Palm Sunday and then you have to go Easter and then you get the palms. My father would make them into crosses and then you would go visit every relative and you'd have to give them one and they'd give you one. Yeah, so those are great traditions. And you know our kids won't have all that but you hope that they do some of it.

KC: And it keeps the family connected.

SP: Are your kids interested in continuing those traditions? Do you think or...

NC: Right now they're just late teenaged boys so who knows. I think my younger one, the one who's in college now. I think yes, he will. And he's close to his cousins so I think they will. That generation will stick together.

SP: How have health issues impacted your life or those in your family?

NC: So, my father died of lung cancer, [pauses] when I had just graduated from college. So, obviously that was dramatic. Still, you never get over anything like that. Thankfully, [knocks on wood] a lot of people have been healthy in my family. I've had my health issues over time and you know, you plow through and make it work and figure out what it is, and make it better. So I ascribe to the philosophy of "I make my choices" and whether I feel like crap or not, I have a job to do and I still have to raise my kids. So I try not to let things bother me, have I gotten sick? Absolutely! Have I been in the hospital? Absolutely! Have I had challenges? Yes! But I've missed very little work or taken time out of my life to worry about it. I just don't.

SP: So, what challenges have you faced having a special needs child?

NC: A lot! Services, the school system, the state, there's never easy answers, and we're educated people and, we have means. I can't imagine what it is like for people who English is not their first language. Economically they don't have the finances. We could do things for him that other people couldn't do for their kids and schools don't care. It's just the worst system ever. It's not just Worcester either, it's all of us. Worcester has a terrible reputation for special needs and not taking care of the kids, the way that they should. And they just push them along! That's exactly what they do. [whispers] Don't get me started.

KC: Aw. [laughs]

SP: [laughs]

KC: It's so sad.

NC: It is sad.

SP: So, how do you get through tough times?

NC: [pauses] Stress... I get stressed, I get very anxious, I don't sleep. I get very—I think a lot of women do sometimes; I get really cranky. Like...

SP: Yep. [laughs]

NC: It can be the stupidest things, we're having company, or it's a kid's birthday and I'm having a party and the house is a mess. Like that would send me over the edge. I can walk down to the sixes and there would be seven hundred people standing out there at three o'clock in the morning and they'll be drunk and their throwing stuff and lighting fires and throwing couches out the balconies, which I've dealt with my entire life, and I can manage that with my—or I could back in the day when I was a lot younger—I could manage that with my eyes closed. But, [laughs] sometimes things at home, just would set me off. You know so, I do, I get very stressed, I get - and the only thing that I can do, it's just to do the work. Just shut up and do it! Right? Just do - if I have to stay up until three o'clock in the morning and do it, I do it. Because then I'm done. So stop stressing about it, the more you stress, the less you're going to do. I just have, and this is what I tell myself. Just stop! Just do it! Get it off the plate. You can only work on one thing at a time. Get it off. I use a lot of lists, I got notebooks, everything has to be organized, and if it's not, I'm all over the place. If I don't write it down, I don't remember it. So the more I could stay organized, is the better my stress level.

KC: How would you define success in your life?

NC: Yeah, I think - I think to have a full life, just to have people around you that love you and care about you. Work is great and I could get all these accolades and my title could change and I can have these initials after my name and get awards and I can do all that, and that's wonderful, But my friendships and my family and those connections, that's the most important thing I think.

ID: Where do you see yourself in like in the next 10 to 15 years?

NC: Oh honey, not doing this! [laughs loudly] I have probably [pauses] - I have to get my youngest through college, so another four, four to six, doing what I'm doing now and then, there's got to be something. Maybe I'll teach! I've always thought—I teach in the masters' program in Springfield [Massachusetts] before I got this job when I was here I taught in the

Higher Ed program once a week, I would go out at night and teach a class to grad students there, and I did love that, and so I could probably see myself teaching, when I'm done with this. This job is kicking my butt. This job is—this job would, this one's...

KC: A lot!

NC: A lot, this is a lot. So, if I can get through this and not kill somebody, if I could make it through this and make a difference. Then, I'll be ready. I don't know. I don't know if I could go to another place and do this again.

ID: Do you see yourself staying at Worcester, or relocating to a different state?

NC: My husband works in Hartford [Connecticut], but he always has. So we've - but we have stayed in Worcester because of the kids. Alright so - because my son was getting services, such that they were, and the other one was in schools in sports. So we chose. When I did my job search, it took me quite a few years. I was very selective, I only applied five places, over three years... four years? And I was in all five of those places and in the last one, that's the one I took. But, my husband wants to move. He keeps saying he wants to move a little closer to maybe Sturbridge [Massachusetts] to cut three minutes of his commute. [whispers] I'm not moving to Sturbridge. Not while my mother's alive. So, and - and she would have to come with us, and she's not. Why would I disrupt her? She lived in that town literally for eighty-five years. I'm not going to. She would move in with us, I know she would. But I'm not going to do that to her and I'm not moving there. So, we're going to stay here for—I don't know what he's thinking. [laughs]

KC: [laughs] Based on your life experience, what advice would you give the women of today and future generations?

NC: Mentorship, mentorship. Think about what you want to do, and, and while you're on campus, find strong women, while it's faculty. I could give you a list. You know, find strong women to connect with.

KC: Do you do this outside? Like If someone wanted to be, like have you as a mentor?

NC: Yes. People contact me, mainly from other institutions and say who I know through my business, through my work. Higher ed is a small field, so everybody knows everybody. You know...so yeah, I have women that contact me and say can we—I'm having coffee with someone from MCPHS [Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences] next week. She's contacted me through this guy and Quinsigamond [Community College in Worcester] I meet fairly frequently, couple people here that I still meet with very frequently. So yes, I think it's - I meet with people that I care about and that I have as mentors fairly frequently and that's just critical. Find people, and then when you decide what field you want to be in, networking and relationships. What do you all want to do?

SP: Communications.

ID: I want to go into law.

KC: Speech Language and Pathology.

NC: So, all of those areas have professional organizations, they all have groups that get together that put on conferences or they have publications that you can subscribe to. The more people you can get to know in your field, the better off you will be. My involvement across the country has helped me do things across the country that I never would've done if I just sat here and did my job at Becker. You know, I'm chairing a national conference in March for student affairs. I just got back from D.C. [Washington] yesterday. I sat around the table with people from California to Florida, Maine and everywhere in between selecting programs for this conference. I can call people in any state that I know, and say, "Hey, what's it going out, out there. This is a problem I'm having; can you help me?" Because I've gotten involved and, most of them are women, not going to lie. Although, I have quite a few male mentors too, but it's not the same. So, getting connected.

KC: Connected with mentors?

NC: Yep, and volunteering to do things, maybe outside of your jobs. That's huge. You know, because your path is going to change. Your jobs aren't going to be like our jobs, growing up. You're going to change jobs many more times than we did. You know, we stayed in jobs, we stayed places. Our parents never left their jobs. You guys are going to move around. You're going to do things much differently than we did.

KC: Now that we are working to tell a fuller story of the history of women that has been recorded in the past, what should we be sure to include in the story of women, here in Worcester, like your perspective.

NC: The role historically that women have had and the immigrant woman I think is important and this city is like a melting pot. There's so many...

KC: Cultures...

NC: Cultures, exactly, and still, to this day, the organizations that have cropped up around this city for immigrants coming into the area, those are huge right now and that trickles down to the schools because we have to educate those children and they need services and even if it's only English, you and communication and ESL services, they need those services.

KC: Is there anyone else you would like to suggest us to talk to?

NC: In terms of, for the project?

KC: The project in general.

NC: I'd have to think about that [pauses] I'd have to think about that.

SP: I think they are asking for recommendations for women.

NC: Recommendations...yeah.

KC: There are some other questions that they wanted us to ask also, about like, they are like additional ones. But they're like meant for like, exactly, like, how old were you when you were allowed to date?

NC: I was sixteen when I could get in a car.

KC: Get in a car?

NC: Get in a car with a boy. We could go out as groups if a parent was driving you... before that. But I couldn't get into a car by myself until I was 16.

ID: How were the women treated during the time when you were in school?

NC: Women's rights has come a long way so I think people my age now, so mid, early 50's—I just turned 52 last week, so a lot of us weren't expected to have careers and when I talked about being in the PTA, [whispers] none of those mothers were working full time. I don't know what they were doing [laughs], but there's not—it's really interesting, I think people are going to go back to work as their kids get older, but I think that your generation and a little bit ahead of you, so those who are out of college, maybe five to ten years, they're working parents whereas my generation, a lot haven't been working parents.

ID: Did anybody, like, ever judge you for going to a women's college?

NC: No. But for working, for working full time and not being home full time? Absolutely! Absolutely that still happens.

SP: What do you think the benefits were to going to all-women's schools?

NC: I think that just being able to do what you wanted and say what you wanted and you didn't have to get dressed up in the morning and it wasn't literally yoga pants back then, it was sweatpants and you could just roll right out of bed and no one cared and you could say what you wanted, and you didn't have to worry socially. RPI [Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute] was right down the street so if we wanted to socialize, we could do whatever we wanted and the fraternity

guys were all over the place. So you know, and RPI didn't have a lot of women in engineering, right? At that time, that wasn't big for women so they didn't have a great women's population so they were always coming down to the women college looking for a social life. So, there was always stuff to do, but in school it just made it so much more comfortable. And the first time I was in class with guys was when I transferred to Stonehill since eighth grade so that was a little weird actually.

SP: I went to Notre Dame [Academy]; right over there, all girls, so coming back to college has been my first experience again being with guys. So yeah, I can relate to that.

KC: Another personal question, like more personal. What was your favorite musical group or song? Dance? Club? If a club, did the establishment cater to a particular group or groups?

NC: I didn't have any particular club, but Jon Bon Jovi is still my favorite.

KC: [laughs]

NC: Yeah, I still love Jon Bon Jovi, yeah.

KC: What difficult transitions did you go through in moving from childhood to adulthood?

NC: Well I think you grow up really quick when your dad dies or a parent dies. Yeah, I got married young, so that was quick. You have to kind of grow up fast or not I suppose. Some people don't. [pauses and tears up] I don't think anything was particularly special about what happened with me, I think I just always knew that I've wanted, I've always just had a plan. I'm just that type of person. I just always have a plan. So I knew, I didn't know when I started working that I wanted my master's degree because when I got out of college I said, "Oh that's it, I'm done, I'm never going back to school again." [whispers] Everybody says that. Now, you kind of need to think about going to school again, right? But then when you get your master's everyone says that's it, never going back. It was always nagging in my head. That was a huge big deal for me. No one in my family has a master's degree, no one has a doctorate. I'm the only person who has ever done that. And I have 33 cousins on one side and six on the other. So, it's a big family but I've just always had a plan.

SP: So, you said you got married young. How did you meet your husband?

NC: Blind date.

SP: Really?

KC: I wish!

ID: [laughs]

NC: Yeah.

SP: That's interesting.

NC: His friend from high school and college was dating one of my cousins, they've been dating for years. We all thought they would get married and they introduced us and they broke up.

KC: And you got married.

NC: And we got married right? [laughs]

KC: What were your most significant extra-curricular activities?

NC: Student government! In college? Student government, volunteering and campus-social life on campus. I was a student leader, we call them now, we didn't call them that. We were just student that did stuff. And we didn't have campus activities or student activities. I was the social vice president of student government. So I plan the parties and the concerts and that kind of stuff for the committee. So I love that kind of stuff, obviously right? That's what I grew up to do.

KC: Do you guys have any more questions?

ID: I just have a last one. So, what memories do you have of significant historical events that took place when you were growing up?

NC: Historical events? Yeah let's see; the Challenger blowing up, I was coming out of philosophy class at Stonehill when there were people walking around and talking about it and I was like, "What?" because it was Christa McAuliffe, the first teacher to go into space, so it would've been a big deal leading up to it. So that was a big deal. I don't remember—President Kennedy was assassinated the year before I was born so—and I don't remember Martin Luther King, I was too little. Although I just went to the memorial this weekend in Boston, it's amazing. I mean in Washington D.C. Amazing, [whispers] I'll show you a picture. So I don't remember that. I do remember the challenger. What else?

ID: Did 9/11 have any big impact on you?

NC: Yes, my cousin died in 9/11. Yeah, he was in the South Tower in the 87th floor and didn't make it out. Well he was in the lobby, that's where they found remains. So yeah it did. My aunt and uncle never recovered from that. My uncle got a heart attack from that night. Actually, he survived that but later passed away. Their family has never been the same. There were four boys; he was the second oldest. So yeah, and that continues to have an impact on our lives. The wars!

ID: As you grew up closer to the Boston area, does the Boston bussing - that era...

NC: The only—that's interesting, when I was in elementary school, bussing was huge and they - they bussed students out to Stoughton [Massachusetts], which is next to Canton, and so that was a big deal. And then some of them had to come to my elementary school for one year. We had some students, but yeah that was a big news worthy. The hostage - Iran hostage crisis - was big. Remember doing a project in class about that. The Munich Olympics, when Olympians were held hostage by terrorist, that I remember. When the wall came down, the Berlin Wall. Ronald Reagan and the Berlin Wall. The space shuttle program wasn't around when I was little, only as I got older, now of course it's done. I mean, I remember the day the man walked on the moon - first man that walked on the moon. Came in from the grocery store, my father was watching it with my mom. I remember getting our first color television, I remember MTV [Music Television], I wanted MTV so bad and my father was like, "That's the work of the devil." Microwave, dishwasher, remember getting those things. Cable, DVR's...

KC: I imagine getting iPhone, DVR's, cell phones...

NC: The first cellphone was in a bag. It was called a bag phone.

KC: Oh, the one, yeah, and the one you had, the big one, with the thing...

NC: The one with the antenna, yeah. That was big [pauses] any technology, we've seen a lot, I mean you guys don't even - you wouldn't even know half of the things - I could say, "What about that?" And you wouldn't even recognize what it is right? You wouldn't ever seen it, you wouldn't ever heard of it before. [shows pictures of Martin Luther king statue from her trip] Yeah we went to the Martin Luther...

KC: That's beautiful, it's like stone.

NC: Yep, it's all stone yeah.

KC: Wow!

NC: We did a couple that night after dinner, we just walked around to see the monuments. It's really beautiful.

KC: I've never been to Washington.

ID: Oh, wow!

NC: You really should!

KC: I want to. They say it changes, like, your perspective.

NC: Amazing, yeah. It's amazing and at night it's really pretty.

SP: I mean, that's all the questions we have for you.

KC: Thank you very much.

NC: You're very welcome. I'll leave you with my card if you need anything.