

Interviewee: Andrea Dottolo
Interviewer: Maria Vecchio
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Transcriber: Maria Vecchio



Overseen by Dr. Lisa Boehm, Worcester State College

MLV: Is it okay that I record this interview?

AD: Yes

MLV: Okay. Today is February 24th, 2009, and I, Maria Vecchio, am here with Professor Dottolo. What is your full maiden name, or married name if applicable?

AD: My full name is Andrea Lynn Dottolo.

MLV: Where were you born?

AD: Syracuse, New York

MLV: When did you move to Worcester?

AD: 2006.

MLV: So you grew up in New York mainly?

AD: I grew up in...I was born and raised in Syracuse, and I went to college in SUNY Oswego [State University of New York, Oswego], which is about forty five minutes away from Syracuse. And then I moved to California for four years where I did my Masters degree, and then I moved to Michigan for five years, where I did my PHD, and then I moved here [Worcester]. So I've been around a lot.

MLV: Okay cool. Um, do you have any children?

AD: No

MLV: Okay. Um, what cultures and ethnicities do you identify with?

AD: Several. I was raised Italian, and strongly identified in an Italian American community. In graduate school, I came to identify as working class, and I didn't realize that until I was in graduate school. I certainly identify with the women's community and feminists in general. But I think what was the question? Social identities?

MLV: Um, cultural ethnicities that you ...or ethnicities that you identify with.

AD: Okay so cultural group would be working class, and ethnic group would be Italian American.

MLV: Okay how does that affect you? When you were growing up...your Italian heritage...did that affect you a lot?

AD: mmm...Yes. The community that I grew up in was sort of an immigrant neighborhood and immigrant...Syracuse is a high population of Italians (American). And it's kind of like Worcester, like it's a lot of Italians and Irish. So, I grew up immersed in an Italian American community. And the Italian cultural tradition was very prominent in my daily life. So understanding myself as Italian, and in fact, they always just said they were Italian. It was never Italian American. *Now* I would say I'm Italian American because I see myself different than Italians in Italy, but...

MLV: So you've been to Italy?

AD: Yeah. Couple times.

MLV: Oh, good!

AD: Yeah. But, my grandparents were, and great-grandparents were immigrants so my family's been in this country for a while but because it was such a heavily...a heavy Italian American population, like the traditions and the culture and the language still hung around a lot. Even though people weren't born and raised there [Italy].

MLV: Yeah.

AD: So, certainly in my values, cultural tradition, food, um family, ideas about family, um, some versions of religious stuff that were imposed upon me based on being Italian. So yeah, I would say all that stuff was very much present.

MLV: When you moved 45 minutes away, and it wasn't...it wasn't a mainly Italian neighborhood anymore was it?

AD: No...but it was very much like Worcester State [College] in the sense that you went to high...you knew people you went to high school with. Right so if like...In the sense that Worcester State is similar...because it's a state school, serving the working class population. It draws from local communities. For the most part.

MLV: Okay, yeah. Right.

AD: Right so it's like people from Massachusetts go here.

MLV: So there weren't many changes?

AD: Right.

MLV: When did you realize that you're an American Italian not just...or Italian American...not just...were there like a lot of changes when you began to move around

AD: Yeah. Right, once I left New York, and when I went to California, and then when I went to Michigan, is when I started seeing that...that I was born and raised in a very particular cultural context. And I think people...people tend to think they're "normal," whatever that is. And they, unless you're exposed to things that are outside of that, you don't know that you also have a very specific subject position or social location that like...yeah that other people don't necessarily see Syracuse, New York as the standard and marker by which all should be measured. Because they're coming from some place else.

MLV: Right. Like you do you do cause that's where you came from.

AD: Well, I *did* until I left.

MLV: Right.

AD: Until I realized like "Ooh." [Professor Dottolo imitates the facial expression of a person who has just come to a realization.] "Oh! That's interesting. Like you're...you've never met an Italian before. You didn't know what it means to be Italian!" Like that's really interesting. Or, I...I hadn't had a lot of exposure to Mexicans, like large Mexican populations. I knew Puerto Ricans, I knew all those sort of Latino groups that were part of the racial formations in New York. But I didn't really know Mexican food...like Taco Bell. Bad Mexican restaurants were sort of all I really knew. I didn't know about so many other groups of people also.

MLV: Where did you find the Mexicans?

AD: In San Diego. So San Diego, California is where I was for four years and so then it was like "Oh! Look at that! It's not just tacos." You know and, and a whole different cultural setting that was very, very different from anything I had known.

MLV: Did you have to make a lot of changes or did you just adjust?

AD: That's a great question. I think it's hard to separate what I was doing there from how I understood what was happening around me. So I was...I went to San Diego for a master's degree

in women's studies. So I was studying women's studies while I was in the midst of this cultural transition. [I took out another piece of paper from my notebook.] Go ahead...take as many notes as you want. So I was studying, and really getting really immersed in women's studies there. I had taken...I had done women's studies as an undergrad, but never had access to a real, strong intellectual and feminist movement before until I went there. So I sort of get plomped down in southern California, and I like showed up with duffel bags full of shorts and sandals cause I thought I was in the Bahamas. So like, no one had ever been west of the Mississippi cause we were an immigrant community. And so like, "Wh-What? San Diego? Where's that?!" [imitating her family] It might as well have been Mars! I mean I remember filling out the application sitting at the kitchen table (cause that's where everything happens in Italian houses, you probably know this right?)

MLV: Yeah. [chuckle]

AD: And my mother saying like, "Why you filling that out? You're not gonna go there. Like nobody *goes* to California." You know? It's sort of like "You're wasting your time," because it was such an impossibility...not only graduate school, but that far away.

MLV: How did they feel? Like were they upset when you actually went?

AD: Nooo! They were really happy. I remember my father being really really happy. And everyone was happy. They were just sort of like "Wait, your going wait wh-whaaattt?"

MLV: It didn't hit until...

AD: Right. And I feel like there was a lot of worry and concern. Like, "Oh nooo where she's so far awaaayy" and you know they were so ...because it's such an insular community because it's both Italian and working class, there was a very insular way of life. So the idea that someone would venture out, and venture out *alone*, I think was kind of a big deal. [phone rings] That's so annoying.

MLV: [laughing] aww.

AD: Ummmm...so I was talking about going away.

MLV: and it like kind of hit them that you were...

AD: Oh! Right, right, right. And the question was did I have to make a lot of changes or did I just adjust. And I think there's a part of the ...what I was *doing* there...the reason I left to go

there could not be separated from how I was seeing the world. So I went there to be, and landed in this place with my shorts and sandals (cause I was in the Bahamas) and landed in one of the best women's studies programs in the country, and no real idea of what I was getting myself into and it turned out to be an incredibly intensive, rigorous, feminist experience. It was everything I could have hoped for, plus some. So really reaaaally doing a lot of the hard work that women's studies has do right? We're looking at race and class and sexuality and age and gender and social locations and institutional power and doing a lot of hard [work]. It's hard! Right? It's not like...because it's personal. Because it's um...right. And so, it forces you to think about yourself in relation to these ideas. You can't just read about gender oppression and not look at yourself and where you

MLV: [word unclear]

AD: Right, Exactly. Or look at the world around you differently. So, yeah I started noticing like cultural difference through the lens of women's studies. Like it's not just "Oh, we're just different from one another," it's like "Oh, these are Mexicans, forced to cross the boarder because they're trying to find work, because of institutionalized oppression." You know? And so I couldn't separate and don't think I should have separated, what I was studying from what I was observing. So the changes that I made were very much through this lens of feminist scholarship. And didn't always...it took a long time for it to sink in. It took a long time. Yeah. So, yeah, I mean there were things that were just sort of like I mean you know I mean there's just such differences in the cultural make-up of San Diego. It's one of the first places I realized where there weren't white ethnic neighborhoods in California. So, there was the black neighborhood (barely), there was the Mexican neighborhood, and there was the white neighborhood. There was no Jewish area, or Italian area, or Irish area, or German area, there was just...

MLV: [word unclear]

AD: Yeah, yeah it just it was like you were white, and all those other things didn't matter in the same way. Cause they were like sort of, you know, blonde haired surfer dudes who were like not really tied to an immigrant ethnic sensibility. And I was sort of like, "what do you mean? You're not..." like I couldn't get that. So that was one real difference. Like "Ooh, Italian doesn't mean the same thing here as it does there."

MLV: Right. So like, when I talk to my boyfriend who's 100 percent American in his eyes, I'm kind of like you, I'm Italian also and I see how my heritage has affected like my family and things that I do and like where I know I'll be living, and stuff like that. Umm, how were you like your family life before you moved? Can you relate to that?

AD: Yeah. I grew up with a very strong sense, and internalized very deeply what family meant and sort of...the short-hand version would be a la famiglia, right which is like the family's first, it comes first, it's the center, it's the center of the social world, it's the center of the emotional world, family is close-by and central. And I believed that. But once I left, and I started to change, and examine those values, I saw that I didn't fit into it anymore. And that was hard. It was hard for me and for my family that I didn't...didn't fit...in the same way anymore. Not only because my life experiences had changed me so drastically from anything anyone there could have ever even imagined, but I also started to think more critically about some of those assumptions that I had been taught.

MLV: So is it because they couldn't like relate to what you were like learning and doing with your life so it wasn't really a support system anymore? Or...did you just...I don't understand.

AD: Yeah, yeah. I don't know that I even know what I'm saying, I'm just saying it as I...My family's very supportive of what I have done in my life choices. But because my experiences were so different, they couldn't possibly understand what it means to move away from the family by yourself and not know a single soul, and go there so that you could read and write all day. That's like not...that's like...these are working class people who are factory workers and teachers and raise kids and get married. Like that's what their life looks like. And they imagine that everybody else's life is gonna look like that too. And so because I had these opportunities, and made these choices that didn't fit that script, then all of a sudden it became harder for them to understand why I was making the decisions I was making and it became harder for me to imagine ever going back to that way of life.

MLV: Do you think it causes resentment?

AD: Oooh, Now we're doing some therapy.

MLV: haha sorry.

AD: May...I don't know...yeah, it probably does. It probably does. I don't know that I would say resentment, but I don't think it's inaccurate. I mean I don't know if that's the first word that would come to mind as much as I would think more like *distance* or *misunderstanding*, but yeah, I mean I think resentment fits.

MLV: And you're still close and you get to see them at times?

AD: Yeah. I mean it was harder to do in California and it was harder to do in Michigan cause I was so far away. But yeah, I still see them and still am in touch.

MLV: Their older-schooled views, do they have that view of like every daughter should be like the idolized housewife? And that should be their aspiration?

AD: Ahah. Um, that's *so* hard. That's a really hard question. On the one hand, yes. Because that's what women should do. They should get married and have babies and be good mothers. And that is a respected and valued and expected choice. On the other hand, it's not like women -- especially the women that I grew up with -- were these sort of domestic goddesses. They weren't the kind of women who...most of them worked (because they had to). They weren't...I guess when I associate those roles, I think of the sort of larger cultural stereotype, which is kind of like the passive woman who's like the "good wifey." And I feel like in Italian, in the community that I grew up in that's not like the women ran the show. You know. The idea that, for example, "wait until your father comes home," I didn't understand was a real thing. Like I never knew anyone until I went to graduate school who actually faced that threat. Dad's not the one to be afraid of! Mom's gonna...Mom will take care of it [speaking of her own experience].

MLV: Yeah, [laughing].

AD: Right. So and the idea that Dad's somebody that...that that gender dynamic, which only existed on television, the kind of Ozzie and Harriet and June Cleaver thing, I thought was like Mickey Mouse. Like it's not *real*, it's for entertainment. It's like "it's on TV, isn't it funny, haha." Like I didn't know that there were real families that really lived like that because everyone in my community also had that dynamic [of fearing mom instead of dad]. So it wasn't like "Oh, the passive little wifey, who sits home, and you know irons napkins." But it *is* the domestic traditional feminine role.

MLV: Okay, I see. Alright I have other questions, too besides family. Like when you were growing up did you have chores?

AD: Mhm.

MLV: You did?

AD: Well, again, I guess when I think of chores I think of were you expected to do stuff around the house. And we didn't necessarily have chores that were like...you know I think of like kids who had a chore chart, you know like "On Tuesday, we take out the trash" [imitating a child's voice], you know like that. We didn't have that. But we had like if mom says "do it" you do it. And she said "do it" a lot. So like clean the bathroom. Or clean your room. Or make your bed. Or changes the sheets. Like those are things we were expected to do.

MLV: Did you have brothers and sisters?

AD: Well, I had a younger sister. Yeah.

MLV: Okay. And you didn't have any brothers?

AD: Mm-mm.

MLV: Your sister...was she like as expected to do things, or cause you were the older one were you less expected or more expected or...how much pressure was put on you guys?

AD: Aaarg. Umm...she's five and a half years younger than I am. So it was kind of a big difference. Like when I'm ten, she's five. So I can scrub the bath tub, but she kinda can't, cause she's five.

MLV: Yeah.

AD: So we had...it was hard...that's hard to *know*. Of course, because we have our own family dynamics, I think that I had more burden than she did. But I don't know if you asked her that, what she would say.

MLV: Right.

AD: Um, yeah. But we weren't like...I wouldn't say I was burdened, like I definitely think that my mom, my mother also felt like "you're supposed to help out when I need your help, but your job is to be a kid." You know what I mean? It's not like...it's not like, I knew kids who like had to do their own laundry and make their own lunches and like get themselves ready for school when they were ten years old, or eight years old for a variety of reasons. Either because the mom

couldn't cause she was working, or cause the mom was like, "You better learn this soon." We were still...my mother still was like, "I'm still gonna make your lunch, you're eight years old."

MLV: Yeah.

AD: You're still a kid.

MLV: But as a, like as a respect thing you would help her.

AD: Right.

MLV: Okay.

AD: Especially if she told us to. Then you just had to do what she said.

MLV: Right. Umm, for...going back to your education, did you have...like what were your main challenges maybe in high school, college, or graduate school, whatever comes to mind?

AD: Whatever kind of challenges come to mind or...?

MLV: [nodding yes] Whatever kind of challenges.

AD: Uh-huh. Umm...when I was...I was the first grandchild, and the first child, on my mother's side, which is the side I was closest to. Which means that I was sort of assigned pretty early on that I was smart. They decided I was smart, for whatever reason. Like [as] an infant, they decided that I was smart. So and I remember them saying things like "Oohh, she's so smart!! Oh! She's..." all those kinds of things. (My grandmother, and aunts and things.) And so, I learned real quick that I was smart, and that I was supposed to...and that I would be rewarded for being smart. So, it kinda...it felt like that was my job, was to be smart. They decided that was my job, and I took on that role willingly. Um, so I always...my mother also um, was an elementary school teacher, and my mother's also *really* smart, like probably should have been a PHD but wouldn't have...not...didn't have those opportunities at the time. So, she taught me to read at a really young age. She's very intellectual. So, I always got good grades because it was really really important to me to get good grades, because that's sort of how I knew what I was worth. That's what I would get rewarded for.

MLV: Did your father have a role in your education?

AD: Yeah, yeah. And this...whenever...like there's that section in the psych of women (the textbook) that it talks about how one of the best predictors of um daughters' performances in whatever kind of um task or role that they choose...they're like to be...one of the best predictors

is fathers' encouragement, or father's role, yeah. And so I always think of my father in that moment because he was always very like, "You can do whatever you want. You do *whatever* you want. You can, you can be anything, anywhere, anytime."

MLV: Did you find him to be really supportive when your mom was like um upset that you were filling out applications to California? Was he more supportive?

AD: Um, so my mom wasn't necessarily (this is a good point) my mom wasn't necessarily upset that I was wanting to go to graduate school, but she thought that was a good idea. She just was like, "You just filled out an application to Jupiter." You know what I mean, it was just like, "What? That's dumb. Like go, go around the corner. Stay in Syracuse." Like she just, she couldn't understand. Like the going *away* part I think was too hard for her. But going...keeping going to school, I think, she thought was the right idea. This was because I took time off after my undergraduate. I was...I stayed home and worked and did sort of secretary crap, and I was really bad at it. Um, so I didn't go right from one program to the next. I took time off in between.

Umm, but yes, my father was very um "You should do whatever you want, you could do whatever you want." When I, when I told them that I had gotten into San Diego, which was like...it was also like me saying, "I think I'm going to Venus." Like you know I didn't know what that meant either. He was very much like "Good for you. Like you have to...there's there's not...you will not be able to make it here in Syracuse because this is a wor... [I think she was going to say working class community]." And he would never have said this, but it was very much like Worcester in the sense that it's like, this is a factory town. Like, what are you gonna do here? Like you have to go away and, and see the world. And he knew that that was an opportunity that he didn't get, and he wanted me to have that.

MLV: That's good.

AD: Um, but so yeah, he was always very, "You can do whatever you want, whenever..." Like very, very much supportive of all that.

MLV: Do you think if um, they weren't, you wouldn't have [gone so far away]?

AD: That's a great question. Probably not. Yeah...if, um...yeah probably not. Especially because so much of what has led up to this point in my academic career has been about that early encouragement about, and them deciding I was, smart. Right? So if they hadn't decided like...if

they hadn't decided that I was the smart one, if they had decided I was the pretty one, or the...the bad one, or the...all those other things that people get assigned (kids in families), I would not have been able...I wouldn't have done all the things I needed to do to get here. Like I wouldn't have done well in high school, and I wouldn't have done well in college, and I wouldn't have done...I wouldn't have done all those other things, so...and I don't think I would have believed I could do it, if they hadn't told me that that was what I was supposed to do. So yeah, no. Their...their support was very crucial.

MLV: Did you have friends that supported you too um, when...before you moved?

AD: Yeah, yeah. Um, because, one thing that I knew very early on, was that you couldn't be *too* smart. Right? Like you couldn't be the nerd, or the dork, or the one who didn't have the social skills. Like you couldn't be ostracized socially. I was very, always very aware of social cues; of why that person made that face, and why did they talk that way, and why did they...? Like social "stuff" was always very important to me. So I knew that I couldn't be a geek. So what that means is, I had friends that I hung out with that were from...ranged from very high...they were...they were...from got good grades, to people who were like, we would celebrate when they got a D- cause we were just happy that they [word unclear]. You know what I mean? Those.

MLV: Yeah.

AD: They were like, "Thank God they passed." But because...so I knew enough to know that people knew that I was...that I would get good grades, but I wasn't...and they would often come to me for help with their own grades, but I tried real hard not to...uh I knew it wasn't "cool" because it was a working class community. It wasn't cool. I learned later that in middle class communities, it's very cool. Um, but in, when I was growing up, in high school and undergrad, I didn't um...I knew that I had to be able to navigate my academic performance without sacrificing social opportunities.

MLV: So there weren't like a group of people who you could have been friends with that like really studied hard all the time and were really smart?

AD: I had a couple. There were definitely...I guess what I'm saying is that that wasn't um...in high school, and in college, I had friends who in many...in both categories, in many categories. Right? Some who studied hard and were really smart and others who weren't. So there were...I

had friends in both places. Yeah. And sometimes they overlapped, and sometimes we all hung out together, and sometimes, depending on who the individual was, they didn't really get along so well because I had a soft spot in my heart for the nerds. But I also had a LOT of fun with these other guys, who were you know, partying all day long or something like that, you know.

MLV: What kinds of things did you guys do?

AD: Well, it changed dramatically over my lifetime, so maybe my life...um, like high school or in college, or...?

MLV: I guess if it changed dramatically, then what did you start out doing for fun with your friends and what did you end up doing? I guess.

AD: Well, my friendship circles changed as I moved. So...

MLV: Do you think *you* changed as you moved?

AD: Oh yeah.

MLV: So, okay.

AD: Absolutely.

MLV: So that's why you did different things?

AD: Yeah, absolutely. And like you know, SUNY Oswego was a working class community where there was...it's a very, very, very cold and snowy place. And there are nine thousand students, and it's a rural area, and a hundred and fifty three bars. So you drink [laughing].

There's a ...

MLV: In high school?

AD: No, college, college.

MLV: Oh.

AD: Undergrad. So, there was a *lot* of partying. A LOT of partying. But when I left to go to California, it's like that...it just stopped. Not only because I was there to study, and do serious hardcore work that I had to pay lots of attention to, but I was sort of over that. Like I was like, "Okay, that was fun, that was like the twenties. You know my early twenties, and that was fun, and now I'm done with that." So, yeah, I think I changed a lot um, as I moved around the country and had different life experiences.

MLV: Did other people in grad school still have...who hadn't had all of that experience yet, did they...did you notice them partying a lot more than you did? Or that you...than you were...

AD: Yeah, I mean I remember being...I mean I was older, too.

MLV: Oh, right.

AD: So, I went to college right after high school, but then after college, I decided I was gonna go get a PHD in women's studies. Period. I didn't understand that having a degree from SUNY Oswego is not a good thing. I didn't understand that state schools weren't seen...and PHDs and universities in the same way. I didn't know that. So I applied to um...Emory, because somebody told me to, even though there was no way in hell I was going to Atlanta, and I applied to Clark. I was coming to Clark. I was *going* to Clark. I was going to study women's studies and I was *going* to get a PHD. I told people I was going there before I even got accepted. Like, I was just *going*. And I didn't get accepted. And that was like, "Oh, shit. What am I gonna do now?" And I didn't understand all the factors that had worked against me. So I stayed home and worked at temp agencies and did like secretarial work for a year and a half, and was ready to pull my own eyes out. So, um then, I was like I have to do something. So I went to the...I got a...I went to master's program, then, instead, and knew I would have a better shot at master's programs than I would going straight for a PHD. So, by the time I went to San Diego, I was 23-24. I was kinda done with it.

MLV: Yeah.

AD: And then after my master's degree, I stayed in San Diego and worked there for a while so by the time I went to my PHD program I was 27. And I was going to school with people who had come right out of undergrad, cause they went to Swarthmore [a private school in Pennsylvania] and fancy-pants schools. So I'm 27 and they're 21, and although it didn't seem like a big deal, they still wanted to drink. So I was just like, "Yeah...not so much."

MLV: Yeah. Not your thing anymore.

AD: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

MLV: When you went to college the first time were there [the first side of the tape runs out of room at this point]...Um, did you have an I.D., like a fake I.D. before you turned 21?

AD: I absolutely did. Especially with the culture of Oswego, which was very much about social gatherings around alcohol. So, whether you were a drinker or not, you had to have a fake I.D. If you wanted to hang out, you know forget about drinking, if you just wanted to go to the bars and be with people. So I absolutely had a fake I.D. for many years.

MLV: And it was really easy to get them back then? Like your friends...would older people just give you copies of their license or...

AD: Yeah. That's what I did. I had...I had...yeah. I just took somebody else's license. So I was always way too afraid to doctor anything. Like to put my picture in an I.D. and have it ya know...cause that was...that was right about the time when they started putting holograms in I.D.s. You know and they would...you know when you go to a...if you wanna check up an I.D. as fake, at least in New York, they would put it under a light to see if the hologram shined through. And you could know if it was a fake I.D. if there was no hologram in there, cause you can't really reproduce that. So I was waayy to scared to um...to not use at least a real license, even though it wasn't *me*. Yeah. So it was just somebody else's I.D. that they gave me. Which was sometimes a challenge. Because her name was Kim Gonzalez, and sometimes this Kim Gonzalez [pointing to herself] and that Kim Gonzalez [pointing to the imaginary friend]would be at the same bar!

MLV: Really?!

AD: [Laughing]. Yup so that would be kind of hard because we'd have to like, "You go in that door, and I'll go in that door," because, you know...

MLV: So you were friends with her, so that's why...

AD: Oh. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So she gave me her I.D. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MLV: Oh okay. That's funny.

AD: Mhm.

MLV: Alright. What else did you do like growing up *as a kid* before...either in high school, or before that? Like did your parents take you and your friends to the movies? Or...What did you do for *fun*? Did you do...like have events, or...

AD: [After a pause while thinking about it], We did not go to the movies. It's interesting, we just didn't. What did my friends and I do for fun? I don't really remember. I was always more...I

always was interested in talking. So, because I was an only child for a while, I...all I had were grown-ups, so I was always very intrigued with what these grown-ups were saying, and wanting to pay attention, and wanting to listen and wanting to participate in their conversations. So I was always very verbal. So I just feel like I don't remember a whole lot of activities as much as I remember just a lot of "talkin' smack."

MLV: Yeah.

AD: You know? Like talking about boys, or talking about who said what, and getting together and hanging out. Maybe playing like...maybe as a *real* little kid like playing make-believe, or playing...you know those kinds of things, but nothing like that are like activities, that I can really think of. I remember like sleepovers, and let's make popcorn, and those kinds of things, but it was always around...it was always around verbal interaction.

MLV: Um, were you like that with your cousins, too, or did you have...

AD: Yeah. I was really close with my cousins as a child. And there were extended cousins. There were lots of them.

MLV: So you always had family get-togethers?

AD: Yes. Oh, yes. So, every holiday was a lot of people. And then there were get-togethers that would be sort of a sub-sample of those fifty people, or whatever. For, for nothing. Just for...just for kicks as a kid. So yeah, we would get together, um, with other family members um a lot. My grandparents were alive...umm...yeah, until my teens and early twenties, and they were...I mean I saw...I talked to them at least, I mean every day. I saw them multiple times a week. And my cousins, and aunts and stuff, they would be around. Yeah. Family was very much the center of social life.

MLV: Mhm.

AD: Less so for my generation than say for my grandparents' generation or even my parents' generation, where they actually like lived all in the same house, or they lived like...this one lived here and they all lived next door...like literally next door. You know?

MLV: Yeah.

AD: Whereas my parents' generation started to move like to the suburb, or that...you know. I mean when I was six they moved from the center of Syracuse to the suburbs, and it was like

literally, *literally* a seven minute drive from my grandmother's house to the suburb, but it was like, "Ooohhhh!!!! She's gone away!!!! What are we gonna do?!" It was a BIG deal, that we were...our address did not say *Syracuse*, New York anymore. It said *Liverpool*, which was like, ya know, right over there [implying that they were very, very close]. But...but because...it was "far away." So, we were a little more used to having more time and distance. Like, a couple weeks might pass, for example. Or a couple months before we saw another cousin or something. Where they...their generation, it was like they were constantly, constantly...that's all they were, was with each other.

MLV: Right. Umm...how old were you when you first got a job?

AD: Oh...

MLV: Or around what age?

AD: Yeah. I think fifteen, or sixteen.

MLV: What did you do?

AD: [With a laugh,] it was a drug store. It was called Fay's Drugs. It was like a...it was like a, it was like a Right Aid.

MLV: Oh, okay.

AD: Um, yeah. Like a Right Aid or a CVS or whatever. And it was like a little, popular chain in Syracuse. I don't know if it ever went anywhere else. They no longer exist, but yeah, so it was a drugstore. I was a cashier at the drugstore.

MLV: Aww [with a smile]. What did you do with your money?

AD: I bought gas. For my big car.

MLV: Did you buy your own car?

AD: [Laughing,] No! my um...this was another big deal, which was why class status was such a big deal for me because compared to the relative people around us, I thought we were livin' *large*. Like we had a house, and a couple of cars, and I always had good clothes, and I thought we were like livin' large compared to other people. My father bought me an '84 Buick Le Sabre, for like eleven hundred dollars, or something like that when I was sixteen. And I remember crying and crying, just like couldn't...like I thought I hit the jack[pot], like it was the lottery.

Like I just...I couldn't believe...I couldn't believe it. But it was the size of a city block, I mean it took like a tank of gas to go around the corner and back, ya know?

MLV: Yeah.

AD: So I bought gas with my money, that's what I did. But I thought I was like a big deal cause I had a car!

MLV: Haha, oh god. [We both laugh.]

AD: And a *lot* of other people didn't. I mean a lot of people I went to school with didn't have a car, and didn't get a car until they were able to buy it themselves. So I thought I was really privileged.

MLV: Did you end up driving like a lot of people around, your friends and...

AD: Oh yeah! Yeah, absolutely. Time to go to school! Like you know, carpooling, and a couple of my other friends had cars too. Um, so yeah, we definitely tooled around town.

MLV: Okay. Umm...Oh, let's talk about work.

AD: Mhm.

MLV: What has this work meant to you? Right now you're teaching here at Worcester State, but I mean any part of your career.

AD: Oh it's my, I mean it's my identity, in many ways. I mean it's who I...I think similarly to the idea that when I became immersed in women's studies, it changed my life. I mean it changed how I saw my world, it changed how I saw myself, it changed how I saw relationships, it changed how...it just, it became a lens through which to understand *everything*. So, it became part of me, my identity as a feminist, my identity as a -- I always knew that I wanted to, I mean at least for a long time I knew that I liked psychology, and I knew that I wanted to teach, but this women's studies piece added so much more to it than I had imagined. I mean, I think my work means...I think it's an incredible luxury that I get to do what I love, that I, that I have the privilege of being able to do this work that I have wanted for so long. But for me, my work is not just like a...it's obviously not a...you don't get into this to make money, right? So it's not like I'll ever be rich. But it's the personal and the political and social commitment; what I study, what I research, and how I teach, for me. It's like who I am.

MLV: Right. What do you plan on doing in the future?

AD: Mhm. So, more of this, is what I hope. This job right now is a temporary position, so it's not a full time position. I would like it to be, but the institution at large is, you know...budget cuts and all kinds of business. Right? So...I'm on the job market, and have continued to be on the job market, and hope to find a tenure-track position someplace like this, if not this.

MLV: Um, for community involvement have you ever been involved in any organizations and stuff like that?

AD: Mhm. I'm really bad at that. Really, really bad at that. For me, I see that as sort of like activism. And for me, my activism is my work. Like I feel like I do my feminist activism through my teaching. That's my commitment. I stink at commun [this word was probably going to be "community"]...I just stink at it. I'm just really bad at community organizing. I'm bad at community service, I'm just bad at it. I just am not like...yeah, I'm just...I'm not really so much into that. It's usually around social things, or academic things.

MLV: Right.

AD: I never really like...although I always sort of wish I was. Like I think like, "Oh yeah, we should like organize, and do something about that cause." And then I'm like, "Aah, I think I want cookies." You know?

MLV: Hahaha.

AD: [In between laughing:] Like I just feel like...it just doesn't really seem...but so I really support those causes, and like, will give whatever I can to people who do that stuff. I just, am not very good at it.

MLV: At organizing it.

AD: Mhm.

MLV: Um, what about health issues? Have you had any health issues in your life? Or that impacted you or a close family member or something?

AD: General health issues?

MLV: Yeah.

AD: You're very good at being ambiguous. Both my parents have had cancer, so that's um something. So that's certainly affected me. They survived. My mother had endometrial cancer and my father had prostate cancer. So they're fine now, but they've both had cancer. Um...I

have migraine headaches, which became more officially diagnosed in Michigan. [They were] highly related to stress, but related to other things, too. I'm telling you this because I'm starting to get a migraine, so I'm like, "Oh. Oh yeah, that's what...yeah, migraine. That's what's happening right now."

MLV: Awww

AD: No, no I've had, sort of had sort of a low-level one all day. So migraines are kind of annoying. They're mostly under control now, more than they ever have been. But yeah, other than that, not so much.

MLV: That's good.

AD: Yeah.

MLV: Okay. Now that we're working to tell more of a story for like...for women's pasts, would you like...like to share anything about your input about that, or like what should we include in the story of women that you would like to see be put out there?

AD: Like the stories...

MLV: That can be applied to you maybe, or other women that you've grown up with that you know.

AD: Say more about the story of women. What do you mean?

MLV: Well, like I feel like for every generation, there's a lot of things that we don't know about those women. And people are gonna be...people could have to read stuff like this later on and do you have anything that you'd like to make known? It could be something small.

AD: Oh, like contribute to the grand narrative?

MLV: Yeah.

AD: Is that what you mean?

MLV: Yeah.

AD: Oh. So you mean like, if this were a time...Is the question sort of like, "We're gonna put this in a time capsule, and what do you want people to see like fifty years from now?"

MLV: Yeah! Exactly.

AD: Okay, okay. Okay. I wish I could say something...I feel like I wanna look something up that Audre Lorde wrote, or Adrienne Rich. Right? I feel like they would have something profound to

say. I think...I don't know. I sort of feel like...I wonder, can you guide me anymore, is it about anything particular? Like what I would want women to know about...mmm ["mmm" refers to "fill in the blank"]. Like I feel like I need a little prompt.

MLV: Okay. Ummm...Maybe troubles that you feel like is kind of generic in this generation that we're working to get past, but maybe it won't be known that we got past them in future generations. Maybe something like that that has affected you.

AD: Aah. That's a good question. Silence on the tape, silence on the tape. She pauses!

MLV: Hahaha.

AD: This is really hard, I'm surprised. Normally I'm, as you know, not speechless often.

MLV: Nope. Hahaha.

AD: Umm...I don't know. I really don't know. I mean I guess I feel like...that...I, I really don't know how to answer that.

MLV: I have another question.

AD: Yeah.

MLV: Okay. My professor says that there are people who think that once women's studies becomes well known, there's not going to be a need for it anymore. What do you think about that?

AD: I think that's CRAP.

MLV: Hahahah.

AD: Hahaha. I think that's crap. I think that, I understand the historical reasons, and the political reasons. And I certainly...I certainly um advocate mainstreaming women's studies. Right? So when I teach intro [Psychology 101], I try to incorporate conversations about race and class and gender. It's hard to do, but I try. Whether that be examples, or whatever, pointing out the fact that they're all dead white guys that we're studying, for example. Like you know, those kinds of things. I really try to mainstream all my classes with infusion of a little bit of women's studies. So I get that idea. But, I also come from the idea that my approach to women's studies is that it is an academic discipline, right, in and of itself. So, although I do see it as a political imperative that we have identity-based studies, like women's studies, or ethnic studies, or [word unclear] studies, I also, I don't think that...racism...I think that sort of implies that sexism will someday

disappear, or that racism...one day when racism is gone, we won't need to study those things. And I just sort of feel like, "Maybe, but that's like three hundred years in the future." So, in the meantime, women's studies is always necessary because it is...and it's always one of the first things that gets cut when it's time to...oh well the women, we just [word unclear] the women because they're not as important. You know?

MLV: Mhm.

AD: So I really think that uhh...I also come from it as women's studies as an academic discipline. I think women's studies and feminist theory has a scholarship that is distinctly and inherently women's studies. I guess it's sort of like, well maybe someday when we all get more in tune to our feelings, psychology might disappear as a discipline. You know what I mean?

MLV: Yeah.

AD: It sort of feels like that. It's like...is the idea that we should all get more in touch with ourselves and be psychologically healthier a goal? Yeah. Like we...I hope that happens! But psychology is a way of doing things both at an academic level and as a practitioner level that is never gonna disappear, cause it's a method and a practice and a theory.

MLV: Yeah. Like we still study history too, and history, like we all know it but...it's still there.

AD: Right. Exactly. Exactly. And the stories that we tell about the past are constantly changing. So, right. It's sort of like...I think it's a goal that we should try to make race and class and gender be part of mainstream education, but women's studies as its distinct academic discipline, I think, is its own thing.

MLV: Okay. Um I'm gonna ask you random questions.

AD: Okay.

MLV: What was like fashion like when you were growing up?

AD: Is this just cause you're into it?

MLV: Yeah, I just picked certain questions that I thought would be interesting to compare and contrast.

AD: Oh! Sure, sure, sure. I love fashion, and hair, and makeup and those kinds of things. So, that's a good question to have chosen for me, because I love this stuff. I'm always threatening that if I don't get a job I'm going to beauty school because that's what I would love to do.

Another thing I would love to do. So, when I was growing up, it was the eighties. Big time. So what's kind of amazing and terrifying at the same time is that I'm sooo delighted to be back in a working class population and teaching working class students because I look out into the audience of my classrooms and I'm like, "Yeah, I know you. Like you look just like...like I went to school with you." Like they look familiar to me, but now that the fashion is back, it's like, "Holy crap. You're actually wearing the things that I wore."

MLV: Oh really?

AD: Yeah, yeah.

MLV: Same things and everything?

AD: Some of them are like really, really similar, because the fashion has come back, twenty years later or thirty years later, yeah. So fashion was...I was always into clothes and earrings, and all that stuff. Girly stuff. My mother was too, so that was a part of...and it was always very important that we had good clothes, speaking of the working class. So what was fashion like? It was eighties. It was, it was...so for example, I have a Style People magazine on my coffee table at home right now. And I was flipping through it to see what's like...what's new for spring.

Right? Like what's in for the season.

MLV: Yeah.

AD: And all this outrageous stuff, like neons, like you know, fluorescent colors, or umm...I'm now trying to think of what else was out there. But I was just like, "Oh my god, I can't believe it's come back!" Even some weird like leg warmery type things, I'm just like, "Oh, I can't believe the eighties are back!"

MLV: The leggings with the skirts and stuff?

AD: Yeah, yeah. Yeah the leggings, absolutely the leggings. For sure, that's definitely a big one. The flat...the boots with no ...the scrunchy boots.

MLV: Oh, yeah.

AD: Right? Those are...

MLV: Uggs?

AD: No, no, those were...those are the new invention, actually the first time I ever saw those I were like ...

MLV: Oh, oh, like heels that looks like they're pinned from the inside on this? [pointing to the upper section of my boot]

AD: Yeah, yeah.

MLV: Okay.

AD: Or, the ones that we used to call them peter pan boots, because they were sort of pointy-ish toe, but with a really, really, there was no heel at all, like completely, completely flat. And then like, it had like a suede or leather, like it sort of looked like they were scrunched down, and nowadays we tuck our skinny jeans into them.

MLV: Yeah.

AD: Yup. Those I'm just always like ugh... I had a pair of black ones like that in 1987, and they were rockin'! [laughter] Yeah, so you know, big dangly earrings, cause there was this phrase there in the nineties when all of that was not in. So I'm very delighted that it's all back.

MLV: Aww, was that a sad time?

AD: It was a sad time! It was a sad time! That whole like when I was in college that whole alternative grunge thing was going on. It was very sad.

MLV: Sweatpants and messy hair?

AD: Yeah, and like jeans and a flannel T-shirt and like big hair was very out. Like, you know.

MLV: Did you conform to that?

AD: Yes I did.

MLV: Aw.

AD: I did.

MLV: Hmm... where did you go shopping?

AD: You know, local malls.

MLV: They did have like the same kind of stores and...

AD: Oh, like you do here for example?

MLV: Mhm.

AD: Oh, yeah. So like the equivalent of Macy's, and The Limited, and Express, and New York and Company (which used to be called Learner's), and um... yeah. Totally working class, straight

up the line...yeah. TJ Maxx was another one of my favorites. I love getting like Michael Kors [a famous fashion designer] and

MLV: Yeah, that's my mom. [laughter]

AD: Exactly.

MLV: I can't go in there because I feel like you have to look *so* long to find what you want but...

AD: Mhm. You do. But you can find like Kenneth Cole shoes for like a third of the price, and that makes me happy.

MLV: Yeah, true. And then you're like, "Sweet."

AD: Yeah.

MLV: Um, how were girls treated when you were in school? I would probably say like older.

AD: Like high school?

MLV: Either like...yeah your sen...like probably you senior year, or freshman year of college. That's probably when you notice differences right?

AD: Yeah, I noticed differences even earlier. [Someone runs by the office we're in fretting about something.] I love Worcester State. [Laughter.] How were they treated? I mean, similar to how they're treated now in the sense that there's a big gap in educational practices.

MLV: Between...

AD: Boys and girls.

MLV: Really?

AD: I, yeah, I think so. I used to give a great assignment in intro to women's studies, actually, when I used to teach it, which was to go...this was at San Diego...to go to a classroom that's not your own. Like just go...see if you can go park in like a high school...any classroom actually, like go back to your old high school, or back to your old elementary school, or go to a classroom here, that has mixed genders in it (the students), and just watch who gets called on, and who speaks, and who raised their hand, and just take notes, like literally just track it. You know? And students would often be like, "Oh this... aahh neeh," you know? And then they'd go do it and they'd be like, "Oh my god, this one guy talked like five times, and there were like fifteen girls that didn't say a word." You know? Like, yeah. Exactly. You know? So...so, the gender

discrepancy is who talks more, and who gets called on more, and who gets to be in what...like right that the boys all do math and science and the girls all do psychology and home ec. You know? That, all that business.

MLV: Yeah.

AD: So, I definitely saw it, for sure.

MLV: Okay. Um, what difficult transitions did you go through in moving from childhood to adulthood?

AD: Woa.

MLV: Aha. I know I said random, small questions and then...

AD: No it's just like a big...it's like...it's very broad.

MLV: We kind of talked about some of them but...

AD: Yeah. I have a theory. This is me being an academic instead of answering the question.

MLV: Okay.

AD: I have a theory. I would love to do a project someday where you interview people on when they found out about Santa Claus. Because I think that there's something there. I think that when people find out about Santa Claus, it marks a moment of disillusionment. Right? That like, "What do you mean?"

MLV: Do you remember when you...

AD: Oh, vividly. That's why...of course it's based on my own experience. Right?

MLV: Okay.

AD: I was like really young. And so, and *horrified* that there was no...like, "How could it be?! What...are you...whaatttt?!!!" Like I was...I cried for days, like I was beside myself.

MLV: Aww!

AD: But I see that as a marker of growing up. Right? Of...that...the sort of privilege, or luxury I should say...not really privilege, luxury of make-believe is part of being a kid. And we have other things in our life that we continue to hold on to that aren't as sort of as dramatic as Santa Claus, but they're still...

MLV: Like life after death kinda things?

AD: Maybe, but just sort of disillusionment. Things that we...stories that we tell ourselves that are like relics of your childhood that you have to get...like move, like...get on with it. That's part of what, sort of what, growing up is about I think. Sort of like (I mean it's a bad example,) but I've heard people be like, "Well, if I don't look at it, then it's not there." You know?

MLV: Right.

AD: Like if...just pretend that its not...that sort of stuff. Right? It's like, "Noo..." you have to like look and get past your disillusionment, whatever that thing is.

MLV: Right.

AD: So, um, yeah I mean a lot of my transition in growing up was about learning to live independently because I was far away, because I was choosing a life that was very different than anyone I had ever known. So I had to...I didn't have models for how to do that. Like, another working class moment right? So when I was in graduate school, I remember people who were privileged talking about how they used their grandfather's dissertation as a model to write their own. I remember being like, "Your grandfather has a dissertation? Like he had a PHD? And so did your parents?!" and like they sort of knew how to do this life, where I didn't.

MLV: Right.

AD: So I feel like that was part of the...I would say the biggest struggle, is like figuring it out on my own cause I couldn't be like, "Mom, how do I apply to grad school?" or, "Dad, how do I do the reference section of..."

MLV: Did you have any friends or anyone that you could look to help you know? Or was it all on you?

AD: It was all on my like fac...like other...like my professors from college. And those like people who I had to seek out that information from (but not in my family, though). This was in graduate school. Like undergraduate was fine, but graduate school was like beyond what anyone could imagine.

MLV: Right. What about...can you tell me when you found out about Santa Claus?

AD: Oh, yeah! Sure. My grandmother was of the um, was of the school that I was "SO SMART!" Right? So smart. And, she was also...didn't fully understand that children are children, they're not grown-ups in little tiny bodies. Right? So she would talk to...she didn't

understand that like you...like we would have like theoretical and intellectual conversations when I was six and she was however old...right? Like we'd get into it somehow. And I forget what happened, but we were talking about it and I was like, "Oh yeahh?? Well then who brings you presents? You know. Who does all those other things? Who puts the money under your pillow when the tooth fairy comes? Or who hides the eggs on Easter?" A very avidly Christian background. And my grandmother was like, "Ugh, your parents! What do you think? Of course." You know, it was just like, "Of course!" And I was devastated for days, and days, and days.

MLV: Oh no! So you found out about the toothfairy, the Easter Bunny, Santa, all of them?

AD: All of it! All of the disillusionment came crashing down. And I was six! And so everybody I knew in my age group still believed! And apparently, I think my mother actually got really mad at my...when I came home still crying from the day before and my mother's like, "Why did you do that? She's six years old. Like "Why would you do that to her?" And she was like, "She's smart. She asked me a question, I'm not gonna lie to her." Like, just was sort of like, "She's an adult almost." You know what I mean?

MLV: Yeah.

AD: So, it was a moment where it was like disillusionment. Like, "Ooohh." Like all the pieces came crashing down. You could see through the haze. And the haze was a lovely haze. Like I...you know...it was a fantastic idea, like it made everything super fun. But it was a lie. And so that's what I mean about that moment. And I think some people, when I talk to [them] about this idea, they'll be like, "Oh, I don't really remember when I found out about Santa Claus." That's probably because they were fifteen when they found out. It wasn't that big of a like shock to their moral system. And some people will be like, "Oh, yeah I found the presents," or, "My sister told me," or whatever. You know? And some people were sort of like beside themselves. Like, you know? So I think that...yeah, so navigating the way out of the life that my family had so traditionally led for all kinds of life opportunities, on top of the Santa Claus story.

MLV: Did your parents continue to put presents under the tree?

AD: Yes, for two reasons. Number one because I had a sister, who was really little.

MLV: Oh, right.

AD: But even now, we still do.

MLV: Aaww.

AD: But even now, we'll write like, "From Santa" on a gift and everybody knows who it's from, but we still do it anyway, just cause it's fun.

MLV: That's cute. [laughing.]