

Interviewee: Bridgette L. Hylton
Interviewers: Erin Keating, Ashley Richardson, and Morgan
Worley
Date of Interview: October 4, 2016
Location: Worcester, Massachusetts
Transcribers: Erin Keating, Ashley Richardson, and Morgan Worley



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

Abstract: Arbane and Jennifer Hylton welcomed Bridgette L. Hylton to the world in 1984, in Boston, Massachusetts. Bridgette resides in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, where she commutes to her job as the assistant director of the Counseling and Assessment Clinic of Worcester, a clinic that provides mental health services to the residents of Central Massachusetts. Bridgette speaks highly of her family and strong connection with her parents, siblings, and extended family and believes the presence of family is vital to a child's upbringing, one of the many morals she tries to invoke upon her son as a single mother. In this interview, Bridgette discusses her education at Dartmouth College and Harvard Law, her work and political experiences that includes being deputy political director of the Gov. Deval Patrick Committee in 2010, and most significantly, her experiences as a Jamaican-American woman. As an advocate for empowering young women, Bridgette believes in the power the female gender has on not only the world, but on each other and encourages women to dismiss the stereotypes inflicted upon them. She takes part in numerous organizations and is a role model for all women, recognizing how far she has come and how she has grown from her experiences in and around Worcester.

AR: General Question...

BH: Ok.

AR: Start with just your general family, what your connection to Worcester is, then we go into education, your work, politics, community involvement, health, and then just kind of a bit of a conclusion. If there are any questions you don't want to answer or anything... [chuckles] just let us know.

BH: Ok.

AR: And please feel free to elaborate because we want this...you know... to not just have us asking you the questions and you answer back and forth.

BH: Ok

AR: So whatever you want to reveal or say...

BH: [laughs] Ok.

AR: Go for it. Alright did you already...

EK: Yup!

MW: Yup. We're all good to start.

EK: Yeah!

MW: So, do you want to do the first one?

AR: You can go ahead.

MW: Alright, so this is just general like family slash Worcester is the title it's so... so what is your full name including both maiden name and married name if applicable?

BH: Bridgette Hylton.

MW: And when and where were you born?

BH: I was born in Boston [Massachusetts] on [] 1984, at Brigham and Women's hospital.
[laughs]

MW: [laughs] and have you ever been married?

BH: Nope

MW: And do you have any children?

BH: I do.

MW: And what culture slash ethnicity do you identify with or if just want to talk about your family background at all?

BH: Yeah, my parents are both Jamaican. So Jamaican-American I guess I would say.

MW: Ok...

AR: [interrupts] So did—are your parents originally from there?

BH: Yup. My older brother and sister were born there.

AR: Oh, wow.

BH: And-yeah.

MW: And did you want to tell us a little bit about your parents?

BH: Pretty solid people [everyone laughs loudly] you know they push us to work hard. my mom In particular is very encouraging in terms of education and hard work and impressing those values on all of us and I think that has kind of helped us to become the people we are today. I come from a blended family and so we have a lot of kids and we all just are very close knit and stay together and love each other and that's a credit to our parent's efforts to kind of make sure that was the case.

AR: Yeah.

MW: Yeah.

AR: Is your whole family in the U.S now?

BH: Yup

AR: Or are your parents still in...?

BH: Nope. Everyone's here. Yeah.

AR: Cool. Do you ever go back there?

BH: Yeah we try to go once a year. I mean each individually or if we go as a family it doesn't always work out. I haven't been since 2014 when my aunt passed away. But we'd all love to go back. My youngest sister goes back the most and the rest of us [everyone laughs] go like different levels of—whenever the opportunity presents itself I guess

MW: And where have you lived during your life? Did you grow up—I-you said you from Boston right—you didn't grow up in Worcester?

BH: No, I grew up in Shrewsbury [Massachusetts]. Actually, I've lived in Boston, I lived in Cambridge [Massachusetts], I've lived in New York, I went to college in New Hampshire...I studied abroad in Europe, yeah so...

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

MW: And what was your neighborhood like generally?

BH: Shrewsbury was a lot quieter in the 80's and 90's [everyone chuckles]. It sort of bloomed and blossomed since then. But we grew up on a very quiet street, there was like a sand lot near where we grew up, where we play and stuff. Our backyard had a stream running through it and a gully so we just played outside all the time. But now that sand lot is like a development. [Laughs] And the neighborhoods where we grew up—there's more people now in Shrewsbury. It's grown so much. But I'd say it was very quiet-suburban life. Yeah.

AR: What did you think of New Hampshire? [chuckles]

BH: I loved New Hampshire. It's really hard to go to Dartmouth and not be indoctrinated to almost an obsessive level of school pride and it was actually one of the reasons that I didn't want to go because my parents friends had gone there and I was like these people are nuts- [everyone laughs] obsessed with this school-like get over it-you know? And I went up for the visit day and it was like a *beautiful* spring day in New Hampshire. All the flowers were in bloom and the trees were like this verdant green and it was just like lovely. And I drank the Kool-Aid and now [laughs] I'm just like all the other [laughs] Dartmouth alumni. From that very first trip up I knew. Yeah, so I did. I enjoyed my time in New Hampshire very much. Yeah-no-It was-very quaint town and...

AR: Yeah I'm from Maine so...

BH: Oh yeah?

AR: That's why I'm always interested if people like a little quieter life up there.

BH: [laughs] Yeah it's quieter. It definitely is. Where in Maine are you from?

AR: Durham, Maine.

BH: Durham-ok.

AR: It's close to Portland. [Maine]

BH: Ok.

AR: [softly] So not too far.

MW: So, I think you said you live in Shrewsbury now...

BH: Mhmm.

MW: Do you live in the same area that you grew up in or have you lived in multiple areas?

BH: No, I bought house sort of across town from where my parents are about two years ago. So it's also a pretty quiet neighborhood [laughs] like little kids running around-but-yeah.

MW: Do other family members live in the same area as you?

BH: Yeah, so my parents live in Shrewsbury. My mom, my step-dad, my brother and his wife and their two kids live about five minutes from me and my sister lives across town, probably like ten minutes.

MW: And do you have any connections with Worcester? I know you obviously don't live in the city but, you work in the city?

BH: I work in the city. So my mother [takes a drink of water] excuse me, sorry.

MW: [chuckles]

BH: ... started a behavioral health clinic in the city in 2007 and it now has four offices, two are in Worcester, two are in Fitchburg and I'm the assistant director of the clinic. So I work here pretty much every day...

AR: [quietly] Wow

BH: ...if I'm not in Fitchburg.

MW: And have you seen any changes in Worcester over time-like since you've been working here or just being...

BH: Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. So Worcester's changed a lot actually especially the downtown area now. I know they are putting a lot of money into sort of revitalizing that part of our community and that's been really awesome. Our main office is on Front Street right on the common so a lot of renovation is happening there and new buildings are coming up. I know Quinsig [Quinsigamond Community College] is building up over there. MGH or is it MGH—the pharmaceutical school that's there. I can't remember.

MW: Oh...

Everyone: Oh... MCPHS [Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Services]

BH: Oh yeah, yeah. So you know a lot of good changes coming in the city that way. And its just-it's interesting watching neighborhoods evolve. The canal district is turning into this very vibrant part of the community and it certainly wasn't like that when I was growing up. It was sort of under resourced for most of my childhood and now they're trying to open the canal back up and opening all these amazing restaurants and trying to bring nightlife into the city which is really cool. I mean even the auditorium, the Worcester auditorium, it's been closed since I was a little kid-like nothing's happened there.

AR: [softly] oh, wow.

BH: I went to an event there this weekend where they are trying to have young professional mixers in this old auditorium which is really cool to kind of see the city plunging forward. As someone who's lived in Boston and New York, Worcester is kind of a sleepy [laughter] little city. I always describe it as gray when people ask me what it's like. So it's nice to kind of see some change kind of coming down the pipeline and that's a credit to the people who run this fine city so...

AR: It would be nice to see it kind of takeoff...

BH: Yeah.

AR: With how Boston does and stuff...

BH: Yeah

AR: I travel back and forth from there...

BH: Mhmm.

AR: So seeing-like seeing people-more people walking around and stuff like that would be...nice.

BH: It would be nice. I mean, I have to say that I don't think if my family didn't run this business here I cannot say I would see myself being here at this point in my life. I mean I never never, never thought that I would come back and work full time doing this but you know there was a need and you know I've learned a ton doing the work about [...] the city but also throughout the work that I do. So I don't know what Worcester *needs* to do to kind of attract young, upwardly mobile people. It's hard because Boston is such a draw it's... our big city so... [shrugs]

MW: Do you think there are any challenges the-that the city still faces or is there anything you

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

would like to change about the city?

BH: Yeah...I mean I think the distribution of resources in the city is a big problem. I know that there's communities that many of our clients live in that don't feel like they are being apart of the 'boom' that the city is seeing in certain neighborhoods. Main South is probably the most prominent example of that, but feeling sort of like they are being left out of the new changes that are coming to the city, which is hard in any city. I know we're not the only city that struggles with that but it would be nice to kind of feel like that everyone was being lifted as we climb. But it's-I think that's probably the biggest one. The other big issue that we work with on a daily basis is substance abuse in the city and I don't—I mean I know the city is trying just about every way they can-whether through the board of health and all these other partnerships to try to help-the police department has a new partnership trying to help kind of alleviate the grip that addiction has on our communities. And I have a lot of feelings about that but [laughs] I don't have time and so I would love to see that continue to be a focus. Not just for the, you know, people who are well to do and now gripped with addiction because of prescriptions but some of the lower income people who have been struggling with an addiction for a really long time in their communities and were kind of ignored until it started to kind of bubble up. So yeah, I would like the city to continue to do its work there and continue to make strong end roads and try to address some of this stuff.

MW: Are there any distinct characteristics that you think makes Worcester the place that it is?

BH: Oh, wow. [everyone laughs] I don't know. [laughter continues] Let me think...Distinct characteristics... I mean it's sort of the center of central Massachusetts which sort of gives it, you know, it's-it's our little city, [Morgan laughs] it's our, you know, it kind of anchors this community. I think a lot of the surrounding communities are becoming really self-sufficient so I feel like Worcester is less of a pull for a lot of people and I know so many people who live even just next door in Shrewsbury who work in Boston or work in Framingham. So Worcester needs to-I don't know how to stay competitive. I think some of the things like I'm a part of startup Worcester. Trying to draw in new companies, new ideas to kind help the city [murmur of agreement] maintain its anchor position over time and some that requires innovation and you know, thoughtful planning which I think the city is trying to do which is really awesome.

AR: Yeah, I believe Worcester is the second biggest city in New England (murmurs of agreement) so...

EK: Yeah

MW: Yeah

AR: You would think they would get some more people here. [nodding of heads]

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

BH: [nods head] Yeah.

MW: And then, what do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been generally? Like if you've experienced anything throughout your career here.

BH: Well my career in Worcester hasn't been that long -because I've only been working here since 2014. I think it's interesting. I think Worcester does have some pockets of sort of 'old boy' networks that are hard to break into and I can say that both as a woman and as a person of color that sometimes it's hard to get a seat at the table. In the community, people also tend to be in Worcester, very Worcester centric so if you're not from Worcester or your parents aren't from here you know they kind of like write you off a little bit. In some avenues, like fundraising, it can be hard. But, yeah. I mean I don't know that's such a broad question for me to [laughs]—I don't know. I think as women—you know I think I've been more active in the women's groups in the community and trying to kind of build some of these lasting connections that will hopefully help women to kind of progress in the city which is exciting for me.

MW: [nodding] Yeah, definitely.

EK: Ok, I'll do education. So, this is basically just going to be about your education so where did you attend school?

BH: So I went to Saint Mark's in Southborough for high school, Dartmouth College as I said, and then Harvard Law for graduate school.

EK: Ok. So do you want to like, describe what you have-like degrees? Like your undergrad, your bach-like what is that for you?

BH: Yeah, so my-or what do you mean-what I...

EK: Yeah, what do-what do you have?

BH: Oh what I major in? Ok.

EK: Yeah.

BH: Ok so in college I majored in sociology and Spanish languages and literature so double major. [laughs] And then I went to law school and did law just as sort of a general degree unless you do [...?] studies.

EK: Ok.

BH: I just have a general law degree. I practiced corporate law...

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

EK: Oh ok.

BH: ...afterwards. And now I just basically kind of meddle in business law with my current job. But I think both degrees have been extremely valuable for me in terms of helping me to frame sort of my worldview, how I address problems. Both degrees have been immensely helpful in that even if I necessarily don't review contracts every day, just having that in my back pocket is very helpful in sort of analytical thinking and things like that so...

EK: Ok. What were your challenges when you were in school with your education?

BH: Let me think... so... I think...wow [laughs] I don't want to say haven't had any... [Laughs] because I mean that's not really a fair thing to say, but I felt very prepared when I went to Dartmouth and I also felt very prepared when I went to HLS [Harvard Law School]. I mean school is school. You have to work hard to do well but I think most of the challenges I faced were maybe before I even went off to college...

EK: Yeah

BH: Kind of growing up in a homogenous community where I was in the very small minority there and some of the challenges that were presented for being a young girl growing up in a place where there weren't a lot of people that looked like me and feeling like that was something that made my peers maybe devalue me and say kind of crazy things to me and my family through the years. So that was a challenge. And you know, things that you can't really put a finger on how that plays out. I think something that I always remember is being in 8th grade, getting ready to go to my freshman year and I had basically perfect grades and asking the teacher to sign the slip to put me into AP Bio and her telling me that she didn't think that I could handle it. And I can never say why she said that. But growing up in an environment like this sometimes you kind of get a feeling for why people would say—why she would say something like that.

EK: Yeah

BH: So that was I think that was the biggest part of the challenges that I faced as a young kid and you know because of that my mom decided that she was going to send me to a prep school because she felt that maybe I would have a better chance there and I think that it was really awesome that she did that and pushed me to go even though I didn't want to leave my friends and the comfort of home. And I faced other challenges there as well, but [shrugs] yeah I think that's probably the biggest hurdle that I faced. You know, being someone who is, well fortunate enough to be well educated and to have had a really awesome education my whole life—still facing people that when I say that I went to the schools that I went to, don't believe me. I had someone the other day—I was talking to this guy and he said, "Oh so where did you go to school?" and I told him, I said 'Oh, I went to Dartmouth and then I was at Harvard for law

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

school,' and he was like, "You didn't really go there," and I was like, 'What do you mean? Like why would you say that? What about me makes you think that?' and he couldn't articulate what it was about me that made him say that. But when you have enough of those experiences over time you start to get a feeling of why these people say these things that they say. [murmurs of agreement] So, yeah, stuff like that I think. Or you know, yeah I could think of a million stories but[laughs] that maybe sums it up.

EK: I just wanted to go back to-what years were your like graduation dates?

BH: Yup. I graduated from high school in 2002...Dartmouth in 2006 and HLS in 2009.

EK: Ok, cool. So upon finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options?

BH: I will say most law schools are like-maybe some of the upper echelon law schools, tend to push people into working at big firms. And I knew that I probably didn't want to forever be at a big firm but I did feel a strong pull to going to a big firm. Law school education is expensive, firms pay good money. [everyone laughs] so it's like a nice draw that pulls a lot of people into big firm life and when I got to the firm I worked with this amazing woman, Who's now the head of the firm that I was at, who I really saw myself in. So even as I did not feel like the work was compelling for me—grunt work when you are a junior associate, basically all you do is like grunt work all the time. [laughs] It didn't feel like something I was passionate about, I was around such talented and intelligent people that I think that I got something really valuable just by being in that space even though the work itself wasn't necessarily all that amazing.

EK: Yeah.

BH: But I did start to feel, after not being there very long, that it probably wasn't going to be a good fit for me long term. I think I had more of an idea of what it was to be practicing corporate law in New York than I did about the actual reality of it. And so I think I kind of got a rude awakening in that time and I sort of reached this place where I had to say 'What do I want to do with my life.' And I thought I had that figured out at 22. And, you know, at 26 and 27, having to reevaluate that again. And that's when I left my firm and I launched a start up with my best friend from law school. And I've been working on that for a few years and then before I went to the firm, in 2009 the economy was just in the tank and so a lot of the major law firms in the country were offering associates a deferral year, so they would, you know, give you a certain amount of money, you would take the year off and come back at the end of the year. I took it and I actually ended up working on a political campaign here in Massachusetts and that was an awesome experience. It's like probably one of my proudest accomplishments when we won that election and another environment where I worked with amazing people, but I was also doing work that I was passionate about so it was hard to kind of compare that experience to going to be a first year at a law firm. And so I felt kind of pulled into that and then once I got out, I felt like the world was my oyster and I could do pretty much anything because I felt really capable and I

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

felt like I had some good work experience and you know, optimistic I guess.

EK: Yeah...Wow... besides that first firm that you said, do you have any like mentors or support networks that really impacted you?

BH: Yeah absolutely I mean the firm, I still talk to a bunch of the folks that I worked with there who are senior to me and also at the same level as me. And on the campaign, I mean I worked with some positively phenomenal people within the Democratic community in Massachusetts who I still keep in touch with to varying degrees and who I still see as role models and mentors. You know from the highest person on the ticket, all the way down. It was the Patrick/Murray [Governor Deval Patrick and Lt. Governor Tim Murray] campaign in 2010. So everyone that I worked with there [laughs] has basically been a mentor to me in some capacity regardless of whether they were more senior to me or junior or whatever. So just an amazing bunch of people.

EK: Yeah awesome. Thank you.

AR: Now we're going-we're going-I know we've kind of talked about work but we're going to kind of divulge into it a little bit deeper. So what was your first job-like ever? You know, it can be high school or something.

BH: Yeah, so I waitressed at Friendly's in White City when there used to be a Friendly's there when I was a teenager.

AR: Oh awesome. And I know you touched upon this as well, but what other jobs have you had? I know you've said you've worked at...

BH: Oh gosh, [laughs] I should have brought my resume. [Everyone laughs] Yeah, I waitressed at Friendly's, I interned at Fidelity Investments—what did I do during the summers—I interned at a law office here in Worcester, I interned at a law firm in Boston, I worked in New York at the firm, I worked on the Patrick/Murray campaign, I worked for my start up, and now I work at CAC [Counseling and Assessment Clinic of Worcester, LLC] so yeah...

AR: Wow.

BH: I hope I'm not missing anything. [Everyone laughs]

AR: And how did you come to do this work ultimately?

BH: Yeah, so I'm in a family so I had sort of the behind the scenes look into sort of what the company's needs were and I figured why should they hire someone else to do it? [everyone laughs] I can do it myself so I actually had to go through the application process. I was interviewed just like everybody else and ultimately they gave me the job and so it's been a really

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

awesome experience and another learning opportunity for me because I helped to sort of set the trends for the company but I also get to work on special projects and things like that so it's given me some opportunities to do work that I didn't even want to do but ended up learning a ton from and I think that working in substance abuse is a big example of that. We launched an initiative earlier this year called substancefreeworcester.org and I wasn't always comfortable working with people suffering from addiction because I didn't have a lot of empathy for that population and I—it's a terrible thing, but it's true and I was really hesitant to kind of get into the nuts and bolts of that program and going through the launch of substancefreeworcester.org and working with the people that benefit from our program and hearing the stories about the people who weren't successful has just made me grow as a person and allowed me to sort of expand my view on what addiction is and how much of a disease it is and how little choice there is in addiction. And I'm really thankful for having had that experience and continuing to have opportunities to learn new things every day and it's a really nice feeling.

AR: So you've definitely kind of just done a 360 with your view? Or do you still hold some of the same like...

BH: I feel like I've been changed. I feel like a different person. I feel like I have really changed whereas now—you know I spoke at the statehouse in the spring, I think it was in April or May about addiction and being an advocate for people who are suffering from this horrible disease and that is not something that I maybe would of thought about at all before, you know, working on the launch of that special project. And we have more special projects coming and I'm sure I'm going to learn a ton from them as well.

AR: So...like you said, it's obviously-now you have a lot of empathy but what has this work meant for you overall?

BH: Yeah I think it's really great to be working in my family's business. We have a singular vision. We don't always agree on how we are going to achieve that singular vision that we have but we are of one mind to where we want to be and what our goals are and the importance of the work that we do and how we want to see the organization move forward. Whether it's through community involvement, or through the nuts and bolts of the day to day stuff that we do which is really nice. Working with family has its ups and its downs. It has its advantages and disadvantages. I won't say disadvantages but challenges. I'm learning a lot and growing from being in that environment. It's different from any other environment I've worked in because I've never worked with my family before the last two years so I'm getting something out of it.

AR: Right [everyone laughs] What are your primary responsibilities in term of housework and childcare?

BH: I have...all of them [laughs]. I'm a single parent so I wear both hats at home which is exhausting, but my son is absolutely the light of my life and so I don't mind it as much. I actually

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

love an immaculate house. Both my grandmothers were pretty meticulous about stuff like that. I don't always have the time to execute it you know with the housework I always imagine my grandmothers like looking down on me from heaven like, "Oh my god she left a dish in the sink," [everyone laughs] like did you see this. [Laughs] and it kind of helps me kind of muddle through some of the day to day, you know having to pick up. My son, he's five years old and he took out the trash for the first time on Monday, and I didn't ask him, he just said, "I'm going to take out the trash," and I swear like angels were singing [everyone laughs] down from the heavens on us in this moment and I like sent a snapchat to all my friends [loud laughter from everyone] like this day has arrived! Like you know, so yeah, I mean I do the best I can. Yeah I try to balance it. I try to be very active in my son's life. I'm very happy, again, to be working in a job where it's flexible hours and I can make up my time where I can, I can work weekends if I need to, whatever I have to do to kind of get the work done. And that allows me to have a lot of flexibility when it comes to being an active participant in my son's life. One of the things that my mom told me and my siblings when we were getting ready to have children was you know, everyone at their school needs to know your name and they need to know that you're sort of in their corner no matter what, and just like I did for you guys you have to do for your children. So all of us have tried to kind of follow that model as we raise kids for a million and one reasons that's an important thing for me as a mom. So, trying to find that balance that everyone is trying to find.

AR: So you obviously seem to be doing a very good job of it, how, I know you said that your work allows you to have flexible hours any everything but how else have you balanced your different priorities, responsibilities, roles that you hold and some of your interests in life?

BH: So I try to—I say this all the time and I'm not always successful at it—but follow my joy. So if I pick a hobby or I pick up a membership or I take up a project that's not work, I try to assess how much joy it brings me, and if it doesn't bring me joy then I don't need to be doing that as much because life is short and to me being happy and making sure that my family is happy, my son is happy, that's what is most important to me, and I want him to also grow up to know that he has a right to happiness, and so if you decide that you are going to be you know, president of the leaf blowers association or whatever and you get into that role and you decide that it's not a good fit, you have a right to say this is not a good fit, and switch directions. I think that is sort of the privilege or the generation that we're in. I don't think that it was as much like that for, I don't know if you guys consider yourselves in my generation. I do [laughs] but our parents kind of stayed in jobs for forty years and our grandparents and they didn't question like is this the happiest that I could be, and so I feel more privileged to be able to ask those questions and make those decisions and decide for myself just even thirty years ago people didn't have that as a luxury. Sometimes this comes with burdens because I also feel like this generation is compulsive about happiness in a way that kind of makes it hard to be satisfied in some way and to find that balance. I'm always trying to decide how important is happiness? You know, how much is it worth? Is it worth stepping down from this board that I committed to, to be happy? Or do I need to see this through and be miserable for the next six months because at the end of those

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

six months I'm going to feel really good about my participation in the project of whatever it is that I'm working on? I mean, happiness tends to be my biggest thing.

AR: Yeah. And what do you think are the pros and cons about the path that you have chosen?

BH: Yeah, I think moving to central Massachusetts was a big decision and it's been good for a lot of the reasons that I've talked about but I wonder sometimes if I've kind of stunted other opportunities that I could have had. It's that constant, did I make the right decision? Is my son at the right school? Are we living in the right neighborhood? Am I making enough money? Am I investing the right way? You know, so I think it's like maybe it is tied in with the last question into about just trying to figure out where my priorities are, for me I think that it's invaluable that my son gets to grow up with his cousins and he gets to grow up somewhere where I know most of the people and you know he has a big yard. When we lived in Boston he didn't have a big yard you know. [Laughs] So those things, it's a tradeoff and I always am asking myself and I'm asking my son's father and I'm asking my parents, "Am I doing this right? Am I making the right choice? Should I make more money and then spend less time with him?" Trying to figure that out is hard, and that in itself, the burden of having to make those decisions sometimes is hard. Even like when you know my son's at a private school and we're trying to decide should he stay at this school or go to a different school? And I'm like why do I have to be the one to decide [laughter] like it just seems like I am not adult enough to make this decision so I need someone who is more of an adult to like come in and decide for me. But because all of these decisions matter, and it's hard sometimes, the burden of having to decide, the burden of adulting I guess is sometimes, it gets depressing sometimes.

AR: So how do you feel about the choice you have made so far in your life and do you have any regrets?

BH: So I read this great book probably like six years ago or five years ago and it was about how what decision you make your brain auto corrects so that you think it's the best decision. And so, you might not feel that way in a year, but usually over time you eventually kind of "it all happens for a reason" you know? So I think with decisions, every decision I've made I'm at a different level of that process, a different place in coming to acceptance of it, that this was the right choice. Some things I'm like, "Oh my God, this was the worst decision I've ever made, what's going to happen?" And then in three years I'm like what was I so crazy about that turned out fine. And some decisions you make right away and you know that it's the best decision for you. So I mean I'm happy with my life so far. I mean of course like I said, I'm like should I move back to Boston? Should I live in New York? Should I—you know, it doesn't mean that I'm not satisfied, you know, it's just that I want the best. [Laughs] It's easy right? [Laughs]

MW: So we already talked about politics a little bit, but there are just a few more questions about it. So, do you consider yourself active politically?

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

BH: I vote in every election, except for one that I did not vote in, which maybe we can talk about a little later I'm not sure if I'm ready to. I have always voted. My mom always took us to vote with her; now my mom takes me and my son to vote with her. And now we vote in different precincts so sometimes we have to hit two in one day. But I, apart from working on the Patrick campaign I've done some work on the Obama campaign. I'll be knocking on doors for Hillary shortly. And yeah, I consider myself pretty politically active and I think that was another thing that came out of working on the campaign is that I have this whole network of friends that are so active politically that I can just hop on board with what anyone else is doing at any time and feel like I'm being a wonderful citizen even though I'm not doing that work full time right now, [laughs] which is really lucky, And yeah, I consider myself pretty active and I tend to be pretty vocal on Facebook. I think I have lost some friends [laughs from everyone] No, but seriously, some of the girls that I grew up with who maybe my politics aren't for them, and that's okay.

MW: So what led you to join with any of the organizations, like you said the Patrick/Murray organization...

BH: Mhm.

MW:was there anything in your life that made you want to do this or was it just convenient you were near that time?

BH: So I really supported that ticket and when I got the call from Cravath [Cravath, Swain & Moore LLP] that I could take the time off to do whatever I wanted I literally got off the phone with Cravath and picked up the phone and called the Patrick/Murray campaign because I just was really excited about it. And also the thing that was interesting about that was we had just come off of Obama's first election, and so I had gone to Ohio during the Obama campaign to knock on doors and work with the Democratic party there, as a student, and I felt so energized by that that I had to have more. Like, I literally felt like I need more of this campaign goodness. It's like this crazy environment with all of these people from different walks of life and they're working crazy hours and they get to know each other super well, and you know, everyone's like dating behind the scenes [everyone laughs] and it's just this great environment to be in when you're young and I honestly think if you have not worked on a political campaign everyone should have to work on a political campaign because it was such a life changing experience for me so I felt really good about that. So when I got the opportunity to take the year off I knew almost instantly that I had so much respect for Deval Patrick and Tim Murray that I wanted to go and give them my time and so that's what I did. I started off answering phones and slowly, you know, got more and more responsibility and you know, it was awesome [laughs].

MW: So just talking about that specific campaign, what were the organization's main goals?

BH: To get Patrick/Murray elected! [everyone laughs]

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

MW: And then kind of off of that were there any main programs or initiatives that you worked on specifically?

BH: Yeah so I was the political director, so I was involved in getting all of the endorsements from all elected officials all around the state from library committees to senators and congress people, as well as labor organizations, you know basically any organization that would want to endorse the ticket was my responsibility. And I worked with- sorry, as policy affairs director and I worked with the political director, so we worked side by side. So basically that's what I worked on. I had a team of interns that were calling every city counselor in the state, every anyone so that we could have this massive list of people and it was a really good list at the end of people that were endorsing the ticket so that was really awesome.

MW: So what would you consider the group's major accomplishments?

BH: We won. [laughs] But also you know, it was an experiment. The head of the Democratic committee at the time, John Walsh, had this idea that grass roots was going to be the future of the electoral politics. It's something that sounds like common sense, but it was really revolutionary I think at the time that the election was going on, that people talking to people was what was going to win the election, it wasn't going to be the debates, it wasn't going to be what people read in the Boston Globe, it was going to be how many people could go out and talk to someone they knew and convince them that this was the right guy for the job and you know being a part of that, kind of seeing that come to life and now seeing other campaigns adopt that. Hillary talks a lot about how you have to talk to your friends, it's your responsibility, and to me that has its, its birthplace in you know, John Walsh's tenure at the Massachusetts State Democratic Party which is really cool, and so that tone that it set, that's what's important is really exciting, to see it kind of echoing now.

MW: And then I know you said that you were involved with the Obama campaign and then you will be more involved with the Hillary campaign, is there anything else that you have been involved with, like any other organizations?

BH: Yeah. I'm active in my sorority, so in my alumni chapter, for Alpha Gamma Alpha sorority incorporated, I'm part of a group in Central Mass called Central Mass Sisters of Excellence which is like this group of professional women trying to figure out what we want to do and be, which is fun. I was an ambassador for the Science Club for Girls and may be again I'm not sure. It's just a really cool organization in Boston that tries to expose young girls to STEM, which is something that I think is super important.

MW: Yep.

BH: I was on the board for Merge Massachusetts for a while, which is an organization that tries to prep women to run for public office which was also an amazing experience. I'm on the parent

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

volunteer association at my son's school, I hold an office there. Those are the big ones I would say. I'm a citizen, but yeah those are the big ones I would say, the ones that probably take up a good chunk of my time.

MW: Yeah, definitely. So then kind of switching topics a little bit, what role has religion played in your life?

BH: Yeah, so I grew up in a family where we went to church on Sundays and Wednesdays and you know my father was pretty religious. I have developed into a more spiritual person. I have a very, I think, close relationship with God or whatever may be out there. But I am less religious now and a lot of that has to do with a lot of the problems that I see with organized religion that are problematic at least and at worst are deplorable...things like homophobia and you know, a church that I had visited recently sent out an email about how transgender people shouldn't be allowed to use the bathrooms for any other sex than to what they were legally assigned or something like that, you know that just goes against my values and you know what I feel like God is about, so you know I probably will never visit that church again. I'm not against churches it's just that I have seen too much, probably. And so I would rather work on my personal relationship with God than with a church at this point, sorry mom!

EK: Okay, so now I'm just going to ask you questions regarding health issues.

BH: Yep.

EK: So how have health issues impacted your life or those in your family?

BH: Yeah, I would say for the most part we're extremely healthy which I praise God for every day. My mother has Crohn's Disease and that has presented some barriers for her, but she's now part of like a Crohn's and Colitis support group in the community so that has kind of helped her to help other people and herself kind of know that they are not alone. She's on like great medicine and she's not sick day to day, but as a kid that was something that was a constant, you know, just sort of humming in the background.

EK: Yeah.

BH: But other than that we had asthma as kids but it didn't really—it never stopped us. So I've been very healthy, my son's super healthy, his paternal grandfather does some work with Saint Jude's and so seeing what other families have to go through with their kids and feeling spared for no reason just by chance from that is very humbling, and I'm very grateful that that has been the case so far.

EK: What are your experiences in accessing quality and affordable health care?

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

BH: It hasn't really been an issue for me to be honest, but I think everyone should be able to have access to quality affordable health care. I am a big advocate of Obamacare, I know it has a lot of kinks that need to be worked out, but Mass Health, we have a good banner program here, it's helped a lot of people, sometimes it spends way too much money trying to help people. But I think it is important I think preventative health is the future, like if we all want to live to be one hundred and ten than we all have to stop smoking and drinking and eating at McDonald's and the problem with that is that healthcare isn't just about visiting the doctor, it's about what you have access to in your community, if you don't have access to fresh fruits and vegetables that are affordable for your family, if you don't have access to education around what is going to keep you healthy and strong, you're never going to be healthy and strong. And it starts just at that basic level of what your family can afford to eat and whether or not the city that you live in is congested with pollution and not just air pollution, but physical pollution that sinks into the ground, that's a big problem that people are running into in Brooklyn trying to plant in toxic soil and you know, that's not going to make you healthy and strong. So, yeah I think it's the—or one of the biggest issues, definitely not just of this campaign but us as a society if we're going to continue to push to modernity and have the coolest devices and stuff how are we going to sustain the basic health of our citizens?

EK: Okay I know you said you have like your son but do you care for anyone else's health care besides your own?

BH: No not really, not full time at least. [laughs] It's just me and my boy, and he's been super healthy as I said so it's not something that on a day to day basis I worry about. I think I see it more from the lens of the work that I do with people struggling with trying to get access to mental health resources and addiction treatment and how hard that is when you don't have money or English is not your first language, or you don't have enough education around the help that is available, or you don't know where you can get it. Those things are just really troubling, especially when it comes to kids it's really hard to see. That wasn't an answer to your question I just wanted to advocate further on health care disparity [laughs].

AR: So, what we have left. We do have some interview kind of conclusion questions as well. We're doing pretty good on time, so we may ask you some like additional random questions if that's ok with you?

BH: Yep. That's totally fine.

AR: Alright. So, how do you get through tough times and what kinds of thoughts keep you going?

BH: I like to write a lot. So I journal pretty much daily. And that helps me to kind of clear my head. I listen to music a lot. I have like a secret desire to be Beyonce. But don't tell anyone that. [laughs] I lean on my family, absolutely, and on my friends. I have the best of both which is

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

really fortunate. I mean everyone has hard times and I think people who have been patient with me are the best part of having good friends and family is being the recipient of patience and that's something that I am trying to give my son because I was not a patient person before I had a child. It's something that I am learning and I think having other people give me that has helped me through more things than anything else and I pray. I believe in God. I pray a lot and talk to God. And yeah I'd say those are the big things.

AR: So, how do you define success in your life and has this definition changed over time?

BH: It's absolutely changed. So in the academic environment that I grew up in and kind of have been through I felt like money was the biggest determinant of success and I still feel like that in a lot of the circles that I run in that if you don't have a ton of money that you haven't made it in life and over time, I've seen that while that it is one marker of success and no one's ever going to say that money is not important, it just helps us to live better lives when you have it in terms of your access to healthcare and food and quality education and things like that. But joy, as I said earlier, kind of up on my radar of what is important to me in having a successful life and I think part of that also is from becoming a mom and wanting that for my son. As much as I want him to make a zillion dollars so that I can retire at his resort somewhere, [laughs] I want him to be happy you know? And if being the most successful person doesn't make him the happiest, than I want him to value his happiness as much as he values other markers of success. And I want that for myself too. So, I'm growing!

AR: And based on your life experience, what advice would you give to women of today and future generations?

BH: Oh God, read a lot of Maya Angelou? No, I don't know. I think find good role models. That is, you know there's a saying that says, "Every time something happens to you it's the first time it ever happened" or, "The first time something happens to you it's the first time it's ever happened," right? So whatever you come to in life it's easily to feel like, "Oh my God, this is like the first time that anyone's ever been divorced or the first time anyone's ever lost their job or the first time anyone's started a new job," and be terrified about what's going to happen tomorrow, but that's just not true. And, so if you don't open yourself up to kind of having other people that you can reach out to that may have been where you've been, you make it a lot harder on yourself as you try to like approach the future. And so having people that you look up to. It doesn't have to be someone who is good at everything. It can be someone who you really admire how she is as a mom or you really admire her success and her career or you really admire how she, you know, handles her friendships or something and lean on that and you know reach out to people and ask for advice and be open to hearing stuff about yourself that you might not want to hear and kind of use that to kind of guide you as you move forward. And that's something that I'm getting better at I think as I get older. My pride goes down and my openness goes up which is good. And then also, again happiness is important. Try to be happy you know? And work hard. I mean I look at Hillary Clinton and the position that she's in now where she gets so much

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

criticism. But she said something the other day, I think it was on Humans of New York about how when she started law school and everyone was like, “You're taking a spot from a man who could be here and you shouldn't be here,” and stuff like that and, “Now some man's going to have to go to war and die because you're here.” And you know our generation is so much more lucky like we don't face that as much. It's still out there of course, but not as much as it used to be so I think it's really important to take advantage of all the opportunities that we have and whether for you that means being the best stay at home mom that you can ever be or the best scientist or a teacher or whatever it is just take advantage of the opportunities that we have because they weren't always available and so we should definitely revel in them. We were talking about how my definition of success changed. I mean I never saw myself as that mom who was going to be on the PTO. I didn't see that as success, but as I'm seeing my son grow and seeing the impact it has on him now I see that as something that makes me feel successful and so you know taking advantage of all aspects of what it means to be a woman and the opportunities that are available to us is really important. And stop being so petty women! [laughs] Oh my God. Like sometimes I get stressed out with social media because it just perpetuates a lot of stereotypes about women that I just think are so dumb and are not my personal experience with the vast majority of women that I know and so I don't understand why these images are out there. Although, Kim Kardashian did something petty the other day that I really did like. When Taylor Swift lied about having that conversation-I don't know if you guys saw this.

MW: Oh yeah, I saw that!

AR: Yeah

BH: OK, and Kim like posted it. OK that time I was like, petty won. That time. But generally speaking, I mean you know, not backstabbing other women, not living in discord with other women for just not liking her for her no reason. I mean I've done that. There's people that I've just—I mean men and women that I just was like, “I don't like her.” “Why?” “I don't know, I just don't like her.” Like being more open and kind of not feeding into those stereotypes about our gender. I would really appreciate—that would be great.

AR: Like we should have each other's backs.

BH: Yeah, exactly, exactly, and you get a lot further like that. And I actually do have friends that I started off not liking and now I cannot imagine not having them.

AR: Right!

BH: You know, so it's like if you're not open to those opportunities your life is smaller, it's less rich.

AR: I guess there's like, there's like two questions that really kind of end this interview.

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

BH: Yep.

AR: But I do want to ask,

BH: Mhmm

AR: A couple,

BH: Yeah!

AR: Of more diverse questions I guess

BH: Yeah!

AR: For one, what major historical events have happened while you've been in Worcester if any? I know you haven't been here necessarily that long.

BH: Yeah, what major historical events have happened while I've been in Worcester? Oh God let me see. I don't-- in the last two years? I don't know. I mean I feel like I've been in Worcester my whole life I mean I grew up in Shrewsbury I grew up you know just over the bridge.

AR: Yeah!

BH: So I mean any historical event that's happened in my life I feel like has happened,

AR: Right!

BH: Since I've been here..

AR: Has there been anything that's impacted you, do you think?

BH: Maybe not Worcester specific, but you know things like selecting our first black president, being in Ohio where people were like literally just in the streets, like we just won the World Series and being a part of that energy really phenomenal, and now maybe electing the first woman. And I'm not someone who buys into identity politics at all but I know that it is better for our children to live in a world where the president hasn't always been a white man than it is for them to live in a world where there's been diversity in the office and I think that's awesome and it gives me a lot of hope. When Obama won I wrote a letter to my future children about this experience that I never thought I was going to have kids before he was out of office, telling them what it was going to be like and we ended up having a baby when he was in office and my son takes a ton of pride and excitement about Barack Obama. Like he calls him Barack because he

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

visited the White House over the summer and the family was there, but they were in their private quarters so we didn't see them. And my son was walking up to everyone like "Does Barack know I'm here?" [Everyone laughs] and I'm like, "He doesn't care!" and Secret Service is like, "Get this kid out of the West Wing like who does he think he is?" But that kind of excitement that he feels, I just am—I didn't have that as a kid and I think that's really awesome. And I mean, I loved the presidents that we had when we, I mean I loved Bill Clinton. I thought he was, I mean except for whatever, [Everyone laughs] I really liked him you know, but it's different I think and so that's really the most exciting things that happened in my lifetime.

AR: This goes a little off topic. How old were you when you were allowed to date and where did you go on dates?

BH: Oh gosh, I think I'm still not allowed to date. [everyone laughs] Yeah I mean I didn't really start, I mean I had a boyfriend in high school like one of my best friends but it wasn't like real, you know? Like I went to boarding school, we didn't go on dates. We like maybe ate lunch together at the cafeteria. It was—but it wasn't like a relationship, really like a grown up relationship. I didn't really start dating until I was in college and then again Hanover is a really small town. There's not really anywhere to go. You don't really go out. You don't really do anything. I didn't really start going on dates until I was in law school really before that it was like, "Oh you want to go to the football game?" "OK so that's a date!" And when I moved back to Boston then I really started dating. What was the second half of that question?

AR: Where did you go?

BH: Oh where did we go? [everyone laughs] football games, frat parties!

MW: Yeah!

BH: No I mean in Boston, you know, out to eat was a big one, concerts, ice skating and ice skating all sorts of things. Go sit at the park. One of the best dates I ever went on the guy took me for this five-hour walk around the city and then we got smoothies and that was like the happiest date I ever had and he didn't spend any money.

MW: Yeah!

BH: He spent five dollars

AR: Right!

BH: But we just had fun! Like seeing Boston together even though we both lived there which was really cool. Yeah, you know, dating!

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

AR: And what was considered fashionable when you were younger?

BH: So, the big thing that has changed for me in terms of fashion, is the national hair movement for black women. So when I was a little girl, if I wore my hair like how it is today people would be like, “What is she? Why is her hair like that?” So, I had to spend hours every weekend or felt the need, like most black women I think felt when I was growing up, the need to straighten my hair to kind of appeal to broader standards of beauty. And the freedom that I felt in 2006, when I cut off all my hair and was able to just wear it how it grows out of my head was the most freeing thing and it’s just a big change in fashion that allowed that to happen, but also I think a change in sort of values about how important is to be yourself. Dove has a great campaign that’s been going on for a couple of years and I don’t know if it’s going to last forever, but about just as women having to feel like we can be ourselves and it’s OK. And that’s really awesome to see fashions changed that way because fashion gets a bad rap a lot of times to being perpetuating really narrow standards of beauty and body size and things like that. So, this is one change for fashion over time that I’ve seen that I am really excited and I hope that never changes. I hope in 50 years, it is just as cool to be yourself as it is today. And also, I mean fashion when I was a kid, I mean bright colors like MC Hammer pants like I mean there are so many. I mean I have lived in, how many decades have I lived in now? I’m in my fourth one so fashion has changed a lot in all that time. From like Lisa Turtle, you know being like a style icon to like now you dress like Lisa Turtle to be funny

EK: Yeah!

BH: You know but like also kind of cool like you know? Or like now Solange and Beyonce sort of setting the tone. Certainly me and my girlfriends are like, “Oh my god! Look what they are wearing!” even though we would never dress like that in real life but it’s just fun to watch right?

AR: And I know you mentioned Beyonce already?

BH: Mhm, Many times!

AR: Do you have?

BH: I like the Walking Dead too, I don't just like Beyonce!

AR: Do you? Do you have? Or did you have when you were younger any particular favorite musical group or song or dance or club?

BH: Yeah! Absolutely! Michael Jackson is my favorite artist of all time! Ever! Full stop, the day he died I remember I was at a fundraiser in Cambridge for one of the city council members and my brother called me and was like, “Oh I think Michael Jackson died!” and I was like, “You're such a jerk, I’m busy, don't call this number again, leave me alone!” And he's like, “Bridge, I’m

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

serious like Google it, he died” and that was devastating! And then it was right after that we lost Whitney Houston, we lost like all these great people and when I was a kid I looked up to and so it was Michael was definitely my icon. And you know obviously he has a very troublesome personal life that I don't know what to think of make of all that?

AR: Right!

BH: But yes, music definitely. And other artists as a kid that I looked up to? I mean Destiny's Child was popular when I was in high school that they were like just coming out. Everybody had the song with WIFA and it was like, “What Destiny's Child! Oh my god!” They were amazing and I remember the first time I saw Britney Spears “Hit Me Baby One More Time.” My sister and I were sitting on the couch in the living room and this song came on and it was like, “What is this music!” We were dancing we had never seen this girl before and she was just sitting at her desk like tapping her pencil with her pigtails and ...

EK: Right

BH: ...it just that's a moment for whatever reason that is solidified in both of our minds in our childhood that Britney Spears became a thing and instantaneous which is really cool, but yeah, I'd say those are the big ones. [everyone laughs]

AR: Sorry, let me just scan through a couple of these I know we've...

BH: Touched on some of these.

AR: Yeah!

BH: Yeah I like a lot of pop music. I like pop, Madonna was like a huge deal when I was a kid yeah!

AR: So how I know you said some stuff about like you personally but how were girls treated in general when you were in school?

BH: Wow, so I had all different experiences for how girls were treated, one thing is that I'm super feminist and I don't see that the way a lot of people—there is sort of like this backlash I guess going on with younger women that that's like a bad thing or something I don't know and I've just never seen it that way. And so I have had some experiences that have rubbed me the wrong way because I believe that I am equal to every other human being living or dead on this planet. And so sometimes, when other people don't agree with you whether they want to admit it or not it can cause tension in your relationships and things like that and sometimes in particularly in college I would say I felt like I was being asked to make myself small so that someone else could feel bigger!

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

AR: Yeah!

BH: And that to me was always really problematic and it's not necessarily because I think that these men were anti feminism, but they were just living their values and their values were different than mine. And so you know that's come into question before it's come into question in relationships that I've had my partner where my partner wanted to tell me what to wear and I am like, "No!" Like, "Don't wear that that dress is too short!" "Excuse me?" You know.

AR: Right

BH: Not that I—that was just an example. I don't wear super short dresses everywhere [everyone laughs] or anything like and it's just come up in relationships and even someone of the friends I have that are male it's the idea that the primary voice in our culture is male. Most books are written with male leads, most literature, most films have male leads so that's the primary identity that is sort of forced on us. And so now, I feel like I have a pretty strong voice and I am very grateful through the passage of time that more women are given a platform to express themselves in a way that feels true to them. And that's the thing that is really important to me that I have seen over time and that I want for my nieces and, should I ever have daughters, I want for my daughters. And so back to Beyonce and my obsession with her apparently I don't know why she keeps coming up [everyone laughs] but with the release of her last album and feeling like that was for women!

BH: And she didn't

AR: Yeah!

BH: Care what anybody thought about it that's not something that we've seen all that much. I mean I guess Madonna in the 80s kind of was like bringing that sort of to the forefront of culture, but to have that unique voice and have it be so feminine and so in your face at the same time I just think that's so awesome and I want to see more of that for girls so that they feel better about doing STEM, about trying new things, about playing sports, about not feeling like they have to conform to a certain standard of beauty, or a way of being, or talk quieter or not state things that they know to be true in the form of a question. There was an interesting article about that a few years ago that girls in classroom tend to, even when they know the answer one hundred percent, instead of saying, "It's barium!" they'll say, "Is it barium?" Why do we do that?

AR: Right

BH: You know? Why?

MW: Yeah!

BH: And that's something that—it's how girls are treated. Another article is talking about scientific explanations that parents give their kids. If a boy asks, "Why does the moon orbit the earth?" A parent might take the time to—and it's not because I think every person is sexist. I think our cultural values are what they are and you know we indoctrinate them whether we want to or not. We adopt the prejudices of the dominant society whether we want to or not. Unless we all work really hard to fight those things, they live in us. So they might tell their son exactly why that happens or they might kind of tell their daughter, "Oh you know the moon, it goes around, something with the tide." You know and so trying to make sure that that happens. Another way that I always think about it is with my son. People ask me, "Your son plays with a lot of little girls!" He probably plays with the same amount of little girls as little boys. And that's important to me because I need him to understand that women are people too! And they are no better or no worse than he is. And if I only say that, "Well you have to play with boys!" A. I am reinforcing gender stereotypes that I don't care about and B. I'm saying that this whole class of people is not worth your time and I'm not going to raise him like that and so you're going to play with girls and boys and you are going to like it! [everyone laughs] I think that is something that as a mother of a son I take really seriously because the way girls are treated is still, not just here but around the world is so crazy and so...

AR: And we've read an article that if we want, if we are going to get women to be treated better more women need to be in positions of power and I think, especially yourself, you've really done something for a lot of future women...

BH: Thank you!

AR: So thank you!

BH: Thank you!

EK: Thank you!

BH: I'm blushing now! [everyone laughs] But also you know, I think it's also how we raise men and how men are raised in society and how men are taught to treat women. And I think my parents did a really good job with my brothers and I am really proud to know them as men that they are and it's something that I hope I am doing for my son. You know the other day my cousin ordered delivery and the delivery guy had her phone number because you know a lot of places you deliver you put a number so that the driver can call you and that delivery driver has been like texting my cousin about how pretty she is and how he knows where she lives. He has her number, not because she chose to give it to him but because of the job that you know he has and when my cousin said to a group of us you know, "I'm thinking about reporting him!" There were men who said "You're going to make him lose his job!" Who cares?

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

AR: Right!

BH: And so I said—the only reason I said, “Maybe not report him,” because he knows where you live and he has your number. And that’s sad, that as women, we still have to live in a way that doesn't reflect our values because my values tell me that’s completely inappropriate and that he should face consequences. But because the way society is sometimes, you have to live with fear as opposed to what you think is the best way to live and so it’s such a complex thing as a women to kind of navigate that all the time. Literally...

AR: Yeah...

BH: Yeah...

EK: It’s hard.

AR: I think we need to like hold men...

BH: Absolutely!

AR: At like a standard...

BH: Absolutely!

AR: Like they need to be reminded about it.

BH: Mhmm! I mean, even my friends who are raising daughters, it’s like, “I have to teach her to not dress a certain way, act a certain way, go to places, don’t draw too much attention!” But I hear less people talking about, I need to raise my son to not just respect women because he can get in trouble if he doesn't respect women, but to respect women because women are people! You know? And so that war kind of, I care deeply about that too, as I am trying to do it in my home. but just as a society would be nice if that was a part of it. You know? If that was a part of the way we thought about bringing up human beings.

AR: Yeah. Thank you! So kind of the last questions: 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 about the history of women?

BH: About the history of women? Wow! These are like some heavy questions [everyone laughs] I mean I think diversity of experiences and voices and not just people who have fancy degrees or careers, but just—I'm sure you guys have already thought about this, but just all types of women, with all different experiences and different stories to tell, coming from different places. And I can give you some names [Everybody laughs] of people that would be good to interview. You

Worcester Women's Oral History Project

30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – info@wwhp.org

www.wwhp.org

know, I just think as much diversity as you can. I think within the feminist movement at large, and just generally speaking, like kind of how we talked about the primary voice in media is male, I feel like within women sometimes the primary voice can be this young pretty white woman and that's who—that's what it is to be a woman in our society. And that's not true. I mean, we exclude trans women. We exclude the LGBT community. We exclude people of color. We exclude people who just have different family dynamics and I would love to see more of that represented, not just in media and art, but in the stories that we tell through history that are passed down and kind of to break down from the monolithic idea of what it is like to be a woman because everyone's experience is so unique, and so as much of that as you can capture I think is really...

AR: Yep.

BH: Really important.

AR: Thank you, we actually do have a spot if you there's people you want to suggest?

BH: I have someone in mind, I don't know if she would be interested. But,

AR: Sure!

BH: But, I have someone in mind. Yeah...

AR: Did you want to give it to us off the interview?

BH: I want to ask her first and then...

AR: Oh, yeah of course!

BH: But I will talk to her and see if she would be interested. And she lives and works here. So...

AR: Perfect! Thank you! I think that's...

MW: I think that's it!

AR: Yeah, that we've done so much!

BH: Thank you guys! It was fun! I just got to talk! [everyone laughs] Thank you guys so much and good luck with your project!

AR: Thank you!

MW: Thank you! And then Erin just has her camera, if you want to be photographed, if you don't want to be photographed, it's totally fine!

BH: Oh, no I can! But you just got to get my good angle! [everyone laughs]

MW: She's a good photographer so...

AR: We can do it against,

EK: Yeah...

AR: Want to it against like... a different background? I don't know...

MW: [laughs]

AR: Did we pause this one?