

Interviewee: Beatriz Patino
Interviewers: Griffin O'Donoghue and Elena Losquadro
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Abstract: Beatriz Patino was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1978. Her mother is from Puerto Rico and her father is from Mexico City, Mexico. She is currently the director of the Cross-Cultural Center at Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts, after having served as a resident director at the college for a number of years. Beatriz discusses how she always went to schools where the majority of her classmates were female and ethnically similar to her. It was a bit of a culture shock for her when she came to college where many more students were white. She majored in psychology and human development at Connecticut College and graduated in 2000. After college, she spent two and a half years in Paraguay as part of the Peace Corps. She talks a lot about cultural differences and how many people either loved or hated her because she was American. She emphasizes the importance of doing service because she did lots of service projects and trips during high school and college. She highlights being thankful for what you have, that although you may have tons of work to do, there are people out there who are homeless or abused, and that we often take certain things for granted.

EL: It is November 29th, 2012. Beatriz Patino, do we have your permission to record your oral history?

BP: Yes.

EL: Alright, let's begin. What is your full maiden name and your married name (if applicable)?

BP: My full name is Beatriz Patino. I don't have a middle name. My former married name was Beatriz Patino-Mancuello, so I hyphenated.

EL: Okay, alright, where were you born?

BP: I was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1978.

EL: Okay. Have you ever married? If so, what is the name of your current husband or the name of your previous husband?

BP: I was married. I met my husband (my ex-husband now) in the Peace Corps. He is Paraguayan and his name was (??) Mancuello (??) and I got married in 2003 and actually just divorced in October of 2011.

EL: Okay. Do you have children?

BP: We don't have any children.

EL: Okay. So, what cultures or ethnicities do you identify with? What's your family background like?

BP: So, my mom is originally from Puerto Rico, born and raised there, and my dad is from Mexico City, Mexico.

EL: That's pretty cool, actually.

GO: It's like a variety.

EL: It's mixed. What were they like, your parents?

BP: Very different. My dad was definitely like the more strict parent. My mom was very much a homemaker, but also both my parents worked in factories their entire lives, so they did a lot of-- my dad did a lot of shipping and receiving and my mom did a lot of assembly line work.

EL: Okay.

BP: So, yeah. They were both pretty fu-I mean I I was lucky in that when we grew up in Chicago we actually lived in a predominantly Mexican neighborhood, so my mom is an amazing cook-

All: [laughter]

BP: - and can cook Puerto Rican as well as Mexican food, which is really nice.

EL: That's, that's awesome. It really is. Where have you lived during your life, other than Chicago?

BP: So, I lived in Chicago and then I--before Chicago my mom lived in New York, in Brooklyn, New York, Park Slope. So, after a few years, well maybe when I was like five, we moved to New York for a year and I actually did kindergarten in New York, and then we moved back to Chicago.

EL: Okay.

BP: And then when I was eight, we moved to Rhode Island. And then, I grew up primarily in Rhode Island. But I still have family in both Chicago and New York.

EL: That's city life.

BP: [laughs] Yeah.

EL: I grew up near New York

BP: [laughs]

EL: pretty close by.

EL: What, what was your neighborhood like in Rhode Island? What was it like living there?

BP: I grew up in a city called Central Falls, and it's only a square mile

EL and GO: Oh wow.

BP: Densely populated yeah. It was kind of funny because when I--coming from New York and Chicago, I thought it was like more country, per se, even though it really wasn't, like you know there was a lot of subsidized housing and- -but to me it just felt like, "Wow there's a lot of houses, there's not a lot of like buildings and buildings and, you know, sky scrapers." So it kind of just felt like very different. But I was still very much around a lot of people that looked like me. You know, there were a lot of Columbians, actually, in the area where I grew up, a lot of Cape Verdeans, so like ethnically and racially it was pretty diverse, which was the case in both other places that I grew up.

EL: So in that, it was definitely similar...

BP: Yeah.

EL: ...maybe not so much in the way it was built but the people

BP: and the people like, you know, just even like- I mean it's a small city but I can find--you know my mom can find all the Spanish products she uses, like there's like corner stores, (??), on every corner, there's you know Spanish restaurants of all different kinds of cuisine. So, there was definitely something familiar you know.

EL: Yeah, you had that-

BP: I was used to

EL: -which is, that's always good to have.

BP: Yeah.

EL: So, you weren't born in Worcester, but when did you arrive here (if you do live here)?

BP: I live here now. I came to Worcester in July of 2003 and I actually first worked at College of the Holy Cross and ran--I helped to run one of their summer programs. They have two summer

programs, one called Passport and Odyssey. So I started working there and then after that program was finishing up, there was an opening here at Assumption for a resident director position and applied and got it, so I lived on campus for many years, I actually just moved off-campus, like this summer, so...

EL: Oh wow.

BP: So yeah. I spent a lot of time on this campus and I've lived in many areas on the campus, so....

EL: That, that's... It's a great place to be-

BP: [laughs]

EL: I think, anyway.

BP: It's a lot of fun, yeah. I like Worcester.

EL: Where in Worcester do you live now?

BP: I currently live on Ashland Street, which is actually--I don't know how much you know Worcester but if you know where the Price Chopper is or Elm Park

EL: Mhm.

BP: and downtown, so I kind of live between Elm Park and downtown so...

EL: Okay.

BP: My street is kind of in between the two. I would say it's probably a little bit closer to downtown than it is like to Elm Park, Park Ave. area

EL and GO: Mhm.

BP: But very close to both.

EL: Okay that, that's pretty-

GO: Yeah.

EL: that's good. Not too far.

GO: Yeah.

BP: No, I mean driving here, it's like no more than like ten minutes, you know, even with some traffic, so it's very close.

EL: Like, in the time that you've been here, I mean has it-it's been almost like ten years, but what changes have you seen? Like I guess in the people and the way the city is, if you've seen any in particular?

BP: Yeah. At first when I got to Worcester I wasn't really sure what to expect, you know? There are definitely a lot of different parts-I remember when I told my mom I was gonna go work in Worcester

EL: Mhm.

BP: -I had a cousin who used to live here and my mom was like, "Oh," but I guess he lived in like a projects or like...

GO: Mhm

BP: so... that was like all she had seen. And then when she came to visit me at Assumption, she was like "This is really nice."

EL: [laughs]

BP: I was like "I know." So you know I quickly noticed that Worcester definitely had a lot of different types of living areas.

EL: Mhm.

BP: Which to me is always cool. It just shows that there's a lot of diversity.

EL: Mhm.

BP: And I quickly noticed that there was a lot of diversity, if not so much on campus, off-campus I noticed there's like, a lot of ethnic restaurants and supermarkets and there's a lot of arts and culture and I've definitely seen that grow. I can see Worcester's like because obviously I'm - I grew up in Rhode Island. I could see Worcester, because it being a college town and having like I don't know like over 30,000 college students just in Worcester. I could see it becoming or wanting to become and taking the steps towards becoming something similar to like a Providence

EL: Mhm.

BP: Where you know like they've definitely done a great job like catering to the college students there and really just like developing their commercial space but also developing their like living

and rental space and so it's been pretty cool to kind of see even like the Hanover Theatre when that was put in and seeing all the shows that go there and even just the colleges like using that space. So that's been really neat and I've just seen a lot more like even just nice living spaces. I can tell they're definitely trying to keep a younger crowd, you know, and also having so many college students if they could keep a younger population and especially downtown just trying to like liven that up some.

EL: That definitely is like... It's important for that, just the fact that there are a lot of different things going on, like- Do you think there's anything in particular that makes it so, like, distinct?

BP: What- I mean I think what I love is that there's still like a lot of like locally-Like I tell students all the time that they don't have to like go out to eat at chain restaurants because there are so many restaurants in Worcester. Things--like I love and I don't feel like there's a ton of chain restaurants here either. Like I feel like there's so many

GO: Mhm.

BP: ...like locally owned, family owned restaurants and stores and little markets and things and I think that's what I love. That that's still available and it's visible too, which I think is cool. So I just really love like what Worcester kind of has to offer and you know has a DCU center so it has you know it has like sporting events, it has like shows that come here, like you know whether it's like concerts or things, it has- You know with the Palladium having like-there's a ton of people and it's so well known. Like I've had so many friends tell me that they co-That they're like obscure artists or random things but like, you know, ah I love that people know that Worcester's known for the Palladium, even though it's like some random you know? And I think it's really cool that that's even here. The museum is awesome, like I always tell--so many people haven't been there and I'm like, "The Worcester Art Museum is really nice," and I try to go as often as I can. And you know it's free to students.

GO: Yeah.

BP: So that's always a push that I try to make. But, I just think it has a lot to offer no matter what you're looking at and you know even like different ages cause like I have friends who have children and they're able to find things to do in the area, as well, which is cool.

EL: Definitely. In regards to like school and whatnot, like where did you go to school like when you were younger and as you grew up?

BP: So, like elementary school or college or...?

EL: Just in general, like elementary school up through...

BP: Yeah, so I started in Chicago, then we moved to New York, and then back to Chicago, and then the rest of my years I spent in Rhode Island in Central Falls. I actually did, went to public school all my life and graduated from Central Falls High School, Junior/Senior High School, it

was actually a junior/senior high school. And then once I left there I went to- I was- while I was in high school I was in a program called Upward Bound. So, I was in that and that was affiliated with Rhode Island College so, starting in 10th grade in high school, I spent every Saturday and every summer at Rhode Island College taking classes. And then for college, I went to Connecticut College, which is in New London, Connecticut. Yeah, so, that's where I did my undergrad from '96 to 2000. I graduated there in 2000. And then, in 2001, I left for the Peace Corps and I was in Paraguay, South America, for two and a half years, so that's where I did my service. And then, when I returned, I got the job at Holy Cross like I told you and then I came here. And at Assumption, I did my master's. I think I started in 200... 4? And, well, regardless, I graduated... I did... I went to school part-time for my master's in counseling, counseling psychology and I graduated in 2008 with my master's.

EL: Alright, wow, good for you.

BP: Thanks. [all laugh]

EL: You're welcome. Connecticut College is very nice

BP: Yeah, it's a nice school. It's a good school.

GO: Did you major in psychology undergrad?

BP: I did. I was a double-major in psychology and human development.

GO: Oh, okay.

BP: So.

EL: Did you face any particular challenges during your education and like what options did you see for yourself other than the Peace Corps when you graduated?

BP: Mmm. So, it was interesting cause my first year at Connecticut College it was a big culture shock. I mean, you know, like I said, I had mostly grown up with people that looked like me, so when I, when I went to college it was the first time... I was like, "I've never seen this many white people in my entire life."

GO and EL: [laughs]

BP: And this many people driving like Volkswagens and Saabs or whatever. For some reason, everyone had... So, I think I was just like shocked at like... just... It was just a completely different culture and, you know, the high school I went to... I mean I'll be completely honest definitely didn't prepare me for college, so I found it really difficult. I spent like, I probably lived at the Academic Support--our version of the Academic Support Center, you know. But, you know, I knew I was there for a reason, so I wanted to make sure to take advantage of that. Unfortunately, my parents are divorced, so like my mom raised me for most of her life. My

father's in my life and has always been a part of my life, but financially my mom was the kind of caretaker and provider. So, when I came to college I'm actually the first person in my family to ever go to college.

EL: Oh wow.

BP: So, I didn't even know what that meant, you know. And I didn't even know that like--it was really funny cause my Upward Bound counselor was like--I was like, "Well, I wanna go." I knew I wanted to go to Connecticut College 'cause I visited it and then I loved it, and she was like, "Well you have apply other places" and I was like "Why?" and she was like "Well cause they could not, you know you could not get in" and I was like, I didn't even know that that was an op- I didn't even know they could say no, like that's how like, you know, I never, I had never met anyone who had even been to college so, like, maybe my teachers and stuff in high school, but I didn't, I didn't understand the process. So, my first year there I struggled. It was hard because most of my friends had stayed close to home, you know, those who even went to college, so it was hard to--even though I wasn't that far I was an hour away but I didn't have a car and...

GO: Mhm.

BP: You know, I was really homesick and then my mom had lost her job. So then I kind of felt like this responsibility. I had two older sisters, but they both got pregnant at 16, so they both started families pretty early and had other responsibilities. And then my brother was five years younger than me. So, I really felt like I had to kind of step up and it was a really hard decision, but my second semester freshmen year I took off from college and--it was really tough and my dean was trying to like--she was like, "Don't do it, most people never come back." 'Cause everyone--people will say like, "I'm gonna take some time off," and then it's really hard to try to come back and do all of that. And I'm like, "I swear I'm coming back." But, I just felt like it was like I couldn't concentrate like it was really hard for me to even that first semester to concentrate when I knew, like, my family was in need and I felt like I could do something about it, you know? Not that I was gonna make grand money but... so I went home and I worked at Dunkin' Donuts and at the TF Green airport, like...

GO and EL: [laughs]

BP: So I just got like two jobs and really was just trying to help out financially and I was like miserable like, "My gosh I really wanna go back to school." Which, to me, really changed my perspective, like when I got back on campus, cause I was eager and happy to be there and really valued the experience. So I kind of went at it totally differently when I finally went back so. So, fortunately, I did go back but I remember when I was going back I had to write a letter, you know, asking to come back and it had to be reviewed and had to get permission and my dean said, you know, I don't know, maybe I missed this part, but I just didn't know, she said "You actually, your scholarship is only for four years but it doesn't, it's like time-sensitive, like, you have to graduate May 2000." Like, she goes, "So what that means is those that--that semester that you missed, you're gonna have to make up somehow, so it's either like, you know, taking an

extra class a semester, like if you get, if you're able to, like if you're, or taking summer courses, or something you know? But, it's not paid for. So, I spent a lot of time- I worked while I was in college and so any money I made I would spend on taking summer courses the summers in between those- to make up that semester that I missed. So, so I did it, which was [laughs] great but it was really difficult. You know, I did work- I had a work study job but I also worked when I was in college. I worked- I was fortunate enough to work at the same place, so like... I worked at the Women's Center of New London, Connecticut, and I did some of their like hotline work and like newsletter work, that was more like my work-study, and then my job job was I ran every day their after school program. So I did that every day with the students at living in like a transitional living shelter, so I did that while I was in college, as well. And then, they don't- We didn't have RAs like you do here. We have what you would call house fellows, and it's only a position you can do your senior year, so my senior year I was in charge of a building. Like, my own building by myself.

EL: Oh wow, that's really cool.

BP: Yeah, very different.

EL: Was it a big responsibility?

BP: I mean it was and the difference there is that there's a lot more traditional housing. Like, we didn't have a lot of apartments there, so all your- mostly all your four years you could live in traditional housing. Like, everyone goes to the dining hall everyone goes to the-

GO: Yeah, yeah.

BP: -kind of one of those things. So like I had 86 residents.

EL: Oh wow.

BP: So, it wasn't like a huge, huge building, but I had all class years, like I had first-years all the way through, through seniors. So, that was kind of cool cause it was such a different dynamic, like trying to cater-

EL: Yeah, since you have everyone right there...

BP: Yeah, yeah

EL: That's interesting.

BP: The upperclassmen lived mainly like singles and then the first-year students lived in doubles and triples and stuff like that.

EL: Alright. That's really cool.

BP: Yeah.

EL: I didn't know they did things like that there.

BP: Yeah.

EL: That's actually really interesting. I mean I know you said you worked at the Women's Center. Were they an important network to you, did you have like mentors in that area?

BP: I did. It was kind of funny. I, I immediately met this woman Carmen, who was a Puerto Rican woman who worked there who was like my mom's age and she kind of became like my mom. Like, it was really family cause she really took me under her wing and I met like her entire family and she would come pick me up on campus...

EL: [laughs]

BP: ... and bring to her house to make me like rice and beans and chicken...

GO and EL: [laughs]

BP: ... and like, so it was awesome like I just met such wonderful and empowering women there. So, it was like a huge part of my experience there and the work that I did because it was something I did every day. Even like, you know, not just from the women that worked there but even the women that lived there: so like listening to their stories and meeting their children and, you know, it just really--I really liked it because it really just opened my eyes to something different. 'Cause it's easy like I'm sure you guys can relate: when you're on a college campus to get like caught up in this bubble and get caught up in life, like: I have all these papers and things to do and that was always like my being set back to reality or like or like even putting things into perspective, where like I was like, "Oh I mean me doing this paper is not that bad, in comparison to, like, hearing some of the stories of these women who have been like you know abused for years and are trying to get their lives back together, so I just really enjoyed being able to connect with the community cause I think--you know, I grew up in a pretty rich community and I think I enjoyed getting that when I was in college. Like, my first year I really didn't but after that, once I got back, I really started to get involved and...

EL: Yeah, it sounds like you really, really liked it there.

BP: I loved it. I was really involved also in like our--so, I'm currently the director of the Cross-Cultural Center but at Connecticut College we had something called Unity House and we actually have--we had like CASA (ph), which was the Asian organization, we had (??), which was the black organization, and we had La Unidad (ph), which was the Latino organization. I was on the exec board for La Unidad (ph). I was also in a group called SOAR which is Society Organized Against Racism and then I was in another group called IPRIDE (ph) which is multicultural pride. So, I-

EL: Wow, that's really cool.

BP: Yeah I really-I loved it and I got involved--like, I think once I got involved that really changed my experience there, you know?

EL: Yeah, like I guess that like being involved in those must have been really like significant and important to you.

BP: Oh, definitely. Yeah, it just really--it just makes you feel like you're, you know, you're really a part of something. Just- I mean it helped me in getting to know people, but it helped me to just like, you know, develop my skills in so many ways, you know, as like a leader, as a friend, as a, even as a student, just getting involved, meeting more faculty, meeting more administration, like I just kind of felt like connected.

EL: Yeah, and that's always really, really great to have.

BP: Yeah, definitely.

EL: Just- -there is one question that I do have, and that's: in regard to like not just when you were in college but when you were also growing up, how did you perceive this? Like, how were women treated, and like girls and women while you were growing up, while you were in school, like all through elementary school and college?

BP: So, I mean I would have to say like first it starts at home. So, I would say starting at home, like my I would think--My mom's pretty--I don't know the word--old school and traditional, you know? Like my mom's kind of like, you know, even though she always worked all her life, she really always said that her place and her job also was to cook and clean and take of the kids. Like, that was really kind of how she was raised, so that was kinda--so, I have to say it was pretty funny because I've always been the more studious one in my family, so I'd get home from school and I'd try to do my homework, so my mom didn't really bug me and my sisters would have to help her or other people would have to help her... cook. So, my sisters learned how to cook and I didn't learn how to cook...

EL: [laughs]

BP: ... which is very disappointing to all my family. But like, I was more of the cleaner so like I had to do the dishes and I had the clean the – so, I'm an awesome cleaner, like my apartment's immaculate,

GO and EL: [laughs]

BP: My mom's like psycho cleaning person, but I think I just grew up in very traditional roles and and I think--so, to me I think I tried to fight that a little bit because I was kind of always more into my education. While I think my mom always valued my education, valued us getting our education, I don't think she fully understood it or like knew what that meant or what it could

do for us. So, I think at home seeing my mom and dad's relationship wasn't good. My dad, you know, he was very abusive, both verbally and physically with my mom growing up, so that was really difficult to kind of witness and see, you know? And both my sisters had been in really physically abusive relationships with their boyfriends or whatever. So, I think I always saw--I witnessed a lot of that, but I didn't let it define--I think I kind of went the opposite way. I didn't let it define who I was or feel like that was my role, even though my mom will still say like, even when I was married like, when my ex-husband would go home with me, my mom would be like "Serve him food." I'm like, "He has two hands. He can serve himself."

EL and GO: [laughs]

BP: "Like why do I have to serve him food?" And my mom would get so mad at me, she would serve him, and I'm like "Alright, whatever" and so but she's just from a different generation and that's what she was taught and that's kind of what she grew up with, so I get it you know? But, it's definitely not me, and it's not that I wouldn't serve him food or wouldn't want... And I wasn't trying to be super combative, but like I think sometimes I try to make a point to my mom that that isn't, you know? I think in school and stuff like I was fortunate enough that the group of students I went- -my classes were predominantly women for some reason so I was always in like honors classes or different things and so I tended to be with more women. There'd always been like one or two guys in our classes so we kind of overpowered...

EL and GO: [laughs]

BP: ... any of those classes. So, I didn't feel like there was a huge, like I didn't feel like women were treated differently cause most of us were women. Yeah, so did that answer your question?

EL: Yeah. I think it definitely did. I'm--that's definitely... perfect. [laughs] Let's see...

GO: Was that the same in college? Was it only women? Or... did that change?

BP: No, that changed in college. In college it was very--it was very different. I don't really know if I noticed it. I think, I think if I noticed one thing just in general, I think in general professors, teachers, in job places or anything--I noticed that people work better with men than they do with women. Or like, I'm guessing like--I don't how I'm trying to say this. I think I'm just thinking like positions of power or in different things like--I think women have trouble being, working with other women, or, you know, there's always maybe some kind of competition. And or where I don't feel like it's the same with men. I feel like it's a little bit different or like if a man has a supervisor that's a female, I feel like there's always a weird like "Oh." Like it's never outright or said. Sometimes I feel like I sensed it or seen it or witnessed it in different situations, kind of growing up.

EL: Alright. How do you feel about the choices you've made throughout the course of your life? Like is there anything you have any regrets? In terms of just what you've done? And, in addition to that, what advice would you give girls of today and for the future?

BP: I really have no regrets. Like, I think I've done the best kind of with what I was given and what I had and what was put before me and I've always tried to kind of challenge myself and, you know, try new things. Like going to college was one thing, but then even doing the Peace Corps -- like when I wanted to do the Peace Corps my family kind of flipped out a little bit because--this is a direct quote from my family. This is in no way my--this is my family's reaction to me going into the Peace Corps: "That's something only rich white kids do because they don't want to work."

All: [laughs]

BP: I was like "Okay," you know? But, I think my biggest regret in college was not studying abroad, so I wanted a way to do that and I felt like what better time or what--when could I actually have an opportunity to do some kind of work and service has always been a really important part of, you know, my life. I did a lot of service work while I was in college. Also I worked with, you know, I worked at some of the daycares like at -- working with children and at different facilities and schools. And then I also did a lot of HIV/AIDS prevention work, so I worked with families affected and infected with HIV and AIDS and--so like I always did a lot of service while I was in college and even before that in high school. But, I think it was a difficult thing to do because my family did not want me to go and there was a lot of pressure and there still is, being the only person in my family who's gone to college. So, you know, like I think financially my family expected me to, you know, finish college and get a job and help them, you know? That was kind of like the expectation and I think it kinda still is. But, so I think they thought I was being very selfish. Like, I mean, even if I'm thinking like, "People enter the Peace Corps that sounds like the most unselfish thing" but to my family they just couldn't understand why I wanted to leave. They were like "People need help here; why can't you just do it here?" and, you know, I think it's just--they just didn't understand, you know? But, I was happy I did it and I think they can see it now, like later on, but I think it was difficult and nobody's ever left the family like that, like for so long. I mean, I didn't come home at all those two and half years. So, I think that like that was really difficult for them, but I really have no regrets. Like I mean you know I mean--I'm divorced but I was in love and he was the right person at the time and then things kind of just happened, you know? Like, you don't--nobody ever gets marry with the intention of getting a divorce. I think that's just--but you never know what's gonna, you know, what kind of things are gonna happen but I am fortunate enough to have like good people around me: not just family but friends or co-workers or being in a good environment and just kind of feeling supported. I guess advice to women is... Let me think... I mean one- I think one thing I've learned is the power of forgiveness. And how important that is in life and everything because I think so many people hold so many things in and it really more affects you and eats at you versus liker really doing anything for anyone else, so it's really just so something so- can be so poisonous to yourself, you know? So, I think forgiveness is really important. And just like challenging yourself to try new things and not, you know, not stopping yourself from like- Or thinking you can't do something that you really can. You know, like or feeling like you have to deal with- be at the status quo or... yeah or just kind of- really opening yourself up to some kind of like surrendering in the positive sense of the word to life and what it has to offer because there are so many great things. I think- The other thing is something that I've really learned is the power of vulnerability. I think it's really hard to, for people to open themselves up sometimes

because I think so many times- I mean I could name a billion times in my life where I've been hurt by someone or something and I could have used that and been like "Never again." But instead, I think I feel like you're never really going to experience the great things in life if you don't make yourself vulnerable. You know? And open yourself up to some of those experiences because if you close yourself off, there's never really any opportunity to experience any of that. And it could be great and beautiful and--or it could not but you'll never know.

EL: Alright. We are going to take a quick break and then we are going to pick this up in a minute.

[recording paused]

GO: So, and we're back. So, if you worked outside of the home for wages when did you begin working and what did you do or what do you do?

BP: Let me see... well my first, well growing up I did a lot of babysitting, I did a lot of babysitting jobs. My first real official job was in high school and I worked at Chuckie Cheese and I was actually Chuckie. I did like birthday parties and different things so Chuckie actually rotated but it was really funny cause I think, you know, people think Chuckie is a male, but it was always a female in costume so it was pretty funny. Other job I've worked, you know like I said I worked at Dunkin Donuts, I worked at, I actually worked at Paramount, which is a card company, like a factory. I've worked at Cross Pen, you know the fancy pens we used to have to-- it was like factory work basically. It was just kind of like easy work that my mom knew people and I was able to kind of get in. I worked at the Learning Smith at the mall. I also worked at TF Green Airport in the like gift shop. Those were some of the jobs I had. And then in college like I mentioned the Women's Center. I also got--we did get like a stipend I did. In high school I was a AIDS-peer educator so I did, we did like education in schools but we also did some like kind of theater, traveling, theater type stuff on AIDS education and then I was in the Peace Corps and then after the Peace Corps I worked at College of the Holy Cross and then I came to Assumption as a resident director then I was an area coordinator and now I am the director of the Cross-Cultural Center here at Assumption.

GO: How did you first hear about Assumption?

BP: So, my --when I was at Connecticut College I was really involved with the, their student affairs office and residential life because I became a house fellow my senior year and Conway Campbell who's here, Catherine Woodbrooks, who's also here, and then Christine Goodwin, who was at College of the Holy Cross, when I got back from the Peace Corps it was really funny because I contacted them to be like "Hey I'm looking for a job. How are things?" You know, just basically how are you, I'm looking for a job, make connections. They were all in Worcester, like Christine Goodwin was at Holy Cross, and Catherine and Conway were here and I was like "That's so weird. They're all in Worcester." So, I-That was how I heard of Assumption and Holy Cross was through the both of them because both of them worked at my undergrad institution.

GO: Oh, okay. And what made you take the job here?

BP: One, I needed a job. [laughs] Two, like I knew I wanted to get my master's but I knew that wasn't ready right out of college. I was kind of burnt out because I worked so much, I was a house fellow my senior year, I wrote a senior thesis, like I was just burnt out. So, when I get back I knew I wanted a way to get my master's but you know always think of finances and I didn't want to take more loans cause I already had loans from my undergrad, so I wanted to find a way to get that and I did a little bit of research and knew that if I worked at a college that I could get my master's and it was--it worked out perfectly that Assumption had a really well-known and really good counseling psychology program here, so when a resident director position became open, and I was told about it, I applied immediately, so... It was kind of funny because it was one of those things where it wasn't available originally. It kind of just randomly happened because the director--there was a new director and the assistant director had left and that moved somebody up. So basically a bunch of people got bumped up and there was an opening. So, I just got super-lucky but I actually didn't start until September 15th, so if you think, I missed all of like training, I missed move-in, I missed--here it is September 15th, everyone's already like moved in and I'm randomly moving in. [laughs] So, I think it was definitely, you know, a blessing. I was really fortunate to have that opportunity and so when I came here I knew- I didn't start right away. I waited a year to start my master's because I mean I had just gotten back and I kind of through culture shock still, trying to get adjusted to being back in the U.S. So I wanted to give myself some time to adjust to that but also adjust to a new job and the campus and the culture. Then the following year I started my master's.

GO: And I guess what is--what about the work that you've done here? What has that meant for you personally?

BP: I really love working in a higher education setting, just because I feel like there's so many opportunities to take advantage of. Like I love going to some of the speakers and lectures and movies, you know because I don't miss the classwork per se. I do miss going to classes, so I kind of feel like, you know, exercising the mind and keep things going and you know I love being able to have these conversations or working with students or talking to them about you know decisions they're making or deciding what to do after college and being able to share some of my experience. And in faith I've also really grown here. I never attended a religious institution even growing up to college. So, coming here I didn't know what to expect, you know, being at a Cat--I am Catholic but I didn't know what to expect coming to a Catholic institution. But I actually, I think it's almost three years now, three years ago I actually was confirmed here at Assumption. So, I did my confirmation here. I feel like I've really grown in my faith and spirituality here and it opened me to be able to have some of those conversations, being able to learn from myself but then also having those conversations with students who are maybe like struggling or growing or learning about themselves.

EL: Has religion been important to you in your life, I'm guessing?

BP: I mean it was growing up cause my mom was like hardcore Catholic and then all of a sudden my mom--I--so I did my--I was baptized and then I did my first communion, and then after that my mom kind of like moved away from church. I don't really know why. I mean, I

never really had this conversation with her. I'm kind of thankful in the sense that like it really opened me up to get me to try other things. Like, I used to study with the Mormons, and then I went to a United Church of Christ, and then I went to Pentecostal church with my aunt, and I think it just led me to explore things like that I wouldn't have ordinarily have tried. Like, my mom made me go to church, but she was kind of on her like hiatus, I guess. I don't know. [laughs] From church. I really just went- I just started exploring and then I really feel like- I always say that God found me, or kept finding me, like I felt like I kept trying to walk away or move away and I kept feeling like I kept being pulled back in. You know, especially when I got to college and one of my really close friends was very- She was very involved in her faith and she kind of became like my big sister. And then, in college I was also in the gospel choir and then-

GO: [laughs]

BP: Yeah, it was like really random. And then, then going to South America, like super Catholic country, like of South America pretty much is, and then also part of my job there was working with house of seminary men, like that were helping me plan this youth group, like it was just so funny. I just kept feeling like everything, every time- The more I tried to like veer away from like the Church or the religion like the more I kept feeling like it was coming back to me and then even just ending up at Holy Cross and then here so... I mean, I don't believe in coincidences, so...

GO: And how have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles, and interests in your life?

BP: [deep breath] I think it was- I think it's gotten easier over time. I think, fortunately, my family's only like- I have my two sisters currently live in Florida, but like my mom, my dad, you know, so it was like some of my family lives in Rhode Island, so that's not very far. So, I try to make an effort to--I think as I've gotten older I've learned to value family and the importance of having them around. So, I try to make sure I make time for them and my friends. I think when I lived on campus it was difficult because my job required me to be here a lot and I felt like I was-- even when I wasn't working I was working, you know? So, I think that was very difficult but I always tried to make time for family and friends and I continue to do so. I think now with my new job, now that I live off campus, it's gotten a lot easier to make more of a balance and really love what I'm doing and enjoy and understand there are times I'm gonna be here and, you know, I want to be here for students and, but also realize I need my me time and I need to kind of prioritize some of that too.

EL: Like-What would you- What do you think about like the personal or professional costs of what you've been doing, like working here? What are some of the costs? What are some of the benefits as well?

BP: Some of the costs... I'd have to say and, and it's not to blame like it's not to blame at all for my divorce, but I lived with my husband, my ex-husband here on campus, and I think that made it really difficult, especially because I mean one, he was coming from another country to like. "We're on this campus." Like you know like I just felt like I had to work a lot and I don't think

he really understood like, nights I was on duty or things that I had to do. So, I think it some ways it was costly in terms of what I was able to put into my marriage sometimes, you know, and having to explain things or even missing some things at home or with friends, you know, like getting people to kind understand that piece that maybe aren't in the field. Some of the benefits are just like the relationships I've created. I mean like I have been to some of my students' weddings and have been to their baby showers and like now that I've been here so long like I have students who I'm really good friends with and I've just build like, you know, you just, just you feeling like you make an impact. You don't really, you know it's not like I get like all these letters or get like, you know, all these thank you's, but like there are little things, you know? Students, you know, like you'll hear something that they mentioned you for something or like you'll get this little thank-you note or you hear from them after a while, like, "Oh, I remember you. We talked about this or you taught me about this and I did this." Or even once student who was like wanted to really join the Peace Corps but wasn't sure and didn't end up doing it and then, you know, was really like "You're the one who really got me to be interested." So like, just really seeing some of the impact is really cool.

EL: I know you said your husband lived with you on campus. Did he work? Was there something that he did?

BP: So, unfortunately, he was in college when he was in Paraguay and he was a -- he owned his own gym and was a volunteer firefighter and a paratrooper and all this stuff. But, when he came here, none of that really mattered, you know, especially because his language skills were pretty minimal. So, he actually-- and these aren't--it was a fine job, I think it just was really difficult on him because he was used to being his own boss. But when he came on campus he actually worked for Sodexo both in dining services and in buildings and grounds.

EL: Oh, okay.

GO: Oh wow.

BP: Yeah, which I think he enjoyed but I think it wasn't really his passion. Do you know what I mean? Like, he felt like he had like a job and profession and business back in his country, so.

EL: Alright. Sort of a different path here. Do you consider yourself active in terms of politics?

BP: I would have to say kind of trying to get into it more. I'm trying to be more active, especially in Worcester, but it think now that I live off campus because now I'm kind of living in the city and seeing more and I'm able to be more and more involved and-So, I wouldn't say I'm, I've been super active but I have a lot of friends that are. So, I think for a while when I was living on campus, my permanent address was Rhode Island, so I couldn't vote here. And I was too far to really understand or know what was going on in Rhode Island. But, now that I'm in Worcester I'm really trying to educate myself and get to know more and, you know,- I have a friend who's really involved politically, so she invites me to a lot of things and she was like a huge Elizabeth Warren fan so I tried to like get involved in local politics through some of her, some of the events and things that's she's kind of had, so...

EL: Alright. Like, would you do community work, volunteer work for it or...?

BP: I didn't. I just kind of attended events where, you know, she did offer volunteer opportunities. I just couldn't fit it with work cause a lot of them were during the day, so.

EL: Okay. And, on another, different path, just sort of jumping around...

GO: Are there any like specific episodes from the Peace Corps that like stick out to you?

BP: [deep breath] Jeez, everything. [all laugh] I don't know. To be honest, it was one of the most amaz--it was difficult, like when, they say it's the toughest job you'll ever love, that's super accurate. I don't really know another way to describe it, but like, I mean, I have to say being a female, being abroad, nobody understands why like your parents would even let you leave home at such a young age. You know, here I was like 21, 22, you know like. And just safety-wise, like I-- it is really difficult to be, to travel and be abroad when you're a female and I think, you know, I don't, sometimes I don't think men have to think about it as much, but it's always in the back of women's minds, whenever you're traveling or doing anything. I just met such amazing people like it was just incredible to see, to witness like the love of people that had never met me before or didn't know me and just kind of be so humble and so giving and so open to like allow me into their families and invite me over for dinner and doing this. It was just beautiful, it's a beautiful I-- I can only speak for Paraguayans, but like, you know, and I've traveled to other countries but like you know they're just super hospitable, wonderful people. But, on the flip side I do have to say I've never--this was an interesting experience. I'd never (??) or felt being so loved and hated simultaneously. People don't have great views of Americans in other countries, so when you're traveling you have to be super aware cause people either love you and put you on his pedestal that's truly unnecessary or they're like- They loathe you for something your government did that you had no control over, but, you know? Or, or, for the longest time I had people who thought I was a spy.

GO: [laughs]

BP: I'm like, "Really, you think I'm like this random little like place, spying on you guys? What's going on here? Like, what do you have to hide?" I don't know, but it was just really interesting. It was just an incredible experience that just really like opened my eyes and- To just the way things are down in other countries and other people and people's views of us and understanding my own culture, so it was so valuable. Like, it was really funny because people there knew more about their history than I would ever know about even our history. Like, they just kind of like- They were just so knowledgeable and so like passionate and so proud to be Paraguayan. And, not that people aren't proud to be Americans but it's just not in the same way, you know? I don't know. It was just such a different culture, like, things don't get done very fast there and I had to get used to that. We used to have like five meetings where we'd just sit around and talk about... things.

GO: [laughs]

BP: Nothing would get done and it was driving me insane, but, you know, I had to work really hard at not like... not making sure that I wasn't putting my definition of what work or how to make, how to get things done on them because they're obviously able to accomplish things so but just in a different way. So, it didn't mean that our American way or our timeliness on things wasn't, isn't always you know the best way or isn't the, you know, the right way. If something's gonna be sustainable it has to come from the people there, so, if anything's gonna get done it has to be their way, you know? And that was really important, you know. Even with my youth- I used to have a few youth groups and they'd always be like "Alright you want us there American time or Paraguayan time?"

All: [laugh]

BP: I'd be like "Ahh!" Cause like for real like we'd set a meeting and they'd show up like half hour, hour later and I'm like, "Why would you do that?" But, you know, I think culturally I understand it because my family is the same way but my mom's like- I told you how crazy she is about cleaning. She's crazy about time as well, which is funny cause culturally that's not the way it is. Like, culturally, you throw a party and you don't expect people to arrive on time. you expect people to show up an hour to two hours late.

EL: That must have been really, really inspiring to work with them. Just, it must have been just a really fascinating experience.

BP: It was. It was amazing. I mean I still keep in touch with a lot of people there. Of course, because I'd married someone from there so I'm still in touch with his family and I have a goddaughter there...

EL: Oh wow.

BP: So, it is, it is really cool to kind of still be able to see some of the fruits of your labor, per say, like just being able to witness that which has been really nice.

EL: Yeah, that's so... wonderful. I really am kind of jealous.

GO: Yeah.

BP: [laughs]

EL: I feel like that must have been such an incredible experience.

BP: It was really cool. I mean, I can say I've never had an experience like it and my--I don't know I think it's just really made me value what I do have and where I've been. So, that's been great. I can't imagine my life without it. I've just made such valuable friendships, not just there but even other Peace Corps volunteers that I keep in touch with, that live all over the U.S. and

even outside the U.S. So that's been really cool to kind of extend the network and just meet like-minded people and, you know, yeah.

EL: I feel like that's... That must have been so... Oh wow. [laughs]

BP: Yeah.

EL: Just something that... something uncommon. You don't really hear a lot of people doing things like that and I think it's really good that you took the opportunity and went with it.

BP: Thanks. And you guys can too!

All: [laugh]

GO: Do you have any closing thoughts or advice for anyone else or...? Anything like that?

BP: Let me think. I don't know. Like it was funny what you said earlier because, about enjoying hearing like a story and stuff and I think it's so funny because if you think about it we never-- how often do we take the time out to listen to somebody else's story? And I think if anything that I've learned throughout my entire--well in my life so far--but in my, in the experiences I've had where I've done service work is the importance of storytelling and the importance of listening to somebody's story. Really just telling your story but also asking and listening to other stories. So, it's kind of funny 'cause our theme at the Cross-Cultural Center is "What's your Story?" So, we've been trying to like thread that in and incorporate that into a lot that we do so I encourage my students to tell their stories cause I'm like, "Everyone has a valuable story to tell." You know? Like especially when we talk about like race and culture because I think what I get from a lot of students well, you know, if I talk to students who aren't students of color, a lot of them will say, "Well, I don't know, like, I don't really know. We've lived here, or my parents, or my great-great grandparents are from Ireland" and don't feel like they have a culture per se, you know? And I'm like, "Everyone has a story, you know?" It doesn't start off the same way you know and like so... It's important to kind of listen to people's stories so I think the stories that I've heard and that I've learned is always what I take away from any experience that I've had and it's really about people, you know? Like, so... Just learning to value those moments you have with people and really being in the moment and listening, you know? That's really valuable. So, I thank you guys for listening to MY story because I thought that was kinda cool. I mean who doesn't like to talk about themselves?

All: [laugh]

BP: No, I mean, I love the opportunity to talk about like especially life experience. I mean, I'm not, you know. I'm 34, so it's not like I'm, I've lived like a long, long life but, you know, it is always cool to reflect and look back on your life.

EL: And it's... Thank you.

GO: Yeah, thank you.

EL: It's been so fascinating. It's been a really, really good thing for you.

All: [laugh]

BP: Good, I'm glad. Glad to hear it.

EL: Thanks so much.

GO: Thank you.

BP: You're welcome.