

Interviewee: Luanne Westerling
Interviewer: Jillian Pendergast and Devin Coleman-Ganley
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Abstract: Luanne Vardo Westerling was born in Meriden, Connecticut in 1963. As an undergraduate student she attended Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts. Luanne says she began developing her leadership skills in college as a Resident Assistant and these skills later helped her to transition into careers in business and higher education. Although she briefly considered a career in law, Luanne is very proud of her current position as Associate Dean of Business Studies and Program Chair of Business Communication at Nichols College which allows her to bring her leadership skills into higher education. In this interview Luanne discusses opportunities as well as challenges women face in the world of business. Her background and experiences allowed her to become the first woman in the Business Department at Quinsigamond College which gave her the knowledge needed to obtain her current administrative position. She also emphasized the importance of taking every opportunity given to you because stepping out of your comfort zone creates the chance to discover invaluable learning experiences.

JP: What is your full name?

LW: Luanne Vardo Westerling

JP: Where were you born?

LW: Meriden, Connecticut

JP: Have you ever been married?

LW: Yes.

JP: Are you still married?

LW: I am still married. I've been married twice.

JP: Okay.

LW: I was married – my first marriage and I have two beautiful daughters who are 22 and 18 right now, and then I recently remarried almost three years ago.

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JP: How did you meet, whichever one you want to talk about?

LW: Okay, I will give you the full – I met my first husband, who I still have a very good relationship with because he is obviously the dad of my two daughters, but we met at work. I worked – when I graduated, and I am an alum from Assumption College – when I graduated I went to work in a financial services company, Large, and he also worked there. So we met there and dated for two to three years and then got married. And then my second husband I met, this is going to sound bad, but in a bar [laughter], however I was with a friend of mine who he knew. So I was out with a girlfriend for dinner and he was in the same bar slash restaurant and that is how we met. But we ironically had lived in the same town, both of us, for over 20 years in Holden, Mass. [JP: oh wow] and just had never crossed paths, which is kind of weird because we had a lot of similar acquaintances and things like that.

JP: Oh, that's interesting [laughs]. So can you talk more about your children?

LW: Sure! My oldest daughter, I told you she is 22 her name is Despina.

JP: That's pretty.

LW: Yeah, she is named after her grandmother, which that's a Greek name and it means 'Mother of God'. Her – on her dad's side her – they are Albanian and Greek, but I loved that name, it was just very pretty and it was a nice memory to her grandmother. But she goes by Des, I only call her Despina I guess when she gets in trouble [laughs]. But she graduated; she recently just graduated from Emmanuel College and she has recently started with Target in their management-training program.

DC: Oh, cool.

LW: So she has her first job out of college and ironically she was Communications major as well, so both of you have that, probably more in your field Devin but she also did an internship with Brigham – no, the Diabetes Center at Brigham and Women's Hospital – and managed their social media for a while. And then she did a lot of work – she worked for two and half years with Red Bull, getting a lot of brand management experience, more marketing related. So we'll see where the road takes her [laughs] I'm not sure, she is just happy to have a job right now. My youngest daughter is 18. She - both my girls graduated from Wachusett Regional High School in Holden, Massachusetts, and she's at Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island. She is a business major and she's going to minor in French. She speaks pretty good French and she went to France. While my oldest daughter studied abroad in Barcelona and my youngest daughter went with her dad to visit and they went as part as that trip, they went to Barcelona and then Paris and I'm told she did very well in Paris [laughs] and got them out of a few scraps. So she loves Roger Williams, she actually applied here at Assumption and was accepted. I wish

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she loved it here but we only live literally 10 minutes away [DC: yeah] and she – although I assured her I would not be coming down here [laughs] that was the only deterrence, so that is kind of where they are right now.

JP: Okay. So what cultures or ethnicities do you identify with and you can tell us about your family background?

LW: Sure. So my mother was 100 percent Irish and I guess she would have been first generation, her father was from Ireland. And my dad is actually - I guess partially first generation, he's Italian and Scottish decent, he is a little bit of a mixed breed. But my grandfather on my father's side came over from Sicily and so was an immigrant and really only stayed – the way the story goes in the United States because he missed the boat back, he had no intentions of staying [laughs]. So he missed it and said 'Well guess I'll stay.' But he did come through Ellis Island and his name is there, we made sure. That's a great trip by the way if you ever go to New York City, go out there. So I guess I would identify with the Irish, Italian, you know, ethnicities. But I also do identify because my first husband was 100 percent Albanian and that was an important part of his culture and has been for my daughters upbringing. So I've learned to cook a lot of the foods [JP: laughs]. I make a great baklava, that is overrated, everyone thinks it's hard to make but it's not [laughs]. I had one of his elderly aunts taught me how to do that. And then I raised my daughters in the Orthodox Christian faith, which is common for Greeks, Albanian, Syrians, which is similar to Catholicism, which I was raised Catholic, so I do identify with that because that was – my daughters were brought up largely in that environment and it is a very rich and that group of people hold onto their traditions very strong. I teach communications though and I teach intercultural communications so, and as I would teach my students so guess I have to identify myself, I am an American. When I travel it's really apparent I am [all: laughs] because I'm sure I stand out as a typical American. So that's – and I will say just because I do think culture and religion are very closely related and there's a lot of gray area there with ethnicity and I saw that more with the Albanian, Greek culture and their religion, they are very closely intertwined. And then most recently when I remarried, I have started going and converted to the Episcopal faith because I was divorced and my husband was divorced as well. It is just a more comfortable setting for us right now and but it does still has many of the customs and traditions I value in Catholicism, so it was a nice, that was a nice transition for both of us.

JP: Can you tell us about your parents?

LW: Sure. So my mom was, as I told you 100 percent Irish. Both my parents – well they met, they went to grade school through high school together, so they met at the age of five and you know grew up, got married. They got married young. My father did go to Boston College and as soon as he graduated he went into ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] so they got married. My mother did not go to college, she was largely a stay at home mom and then as we got a littler older she worked in the public school

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system as an aide. My father worked for the oil companies, Texaco, for his entire career he was in sales management and managed large territories in New England. My mother is now deceased. My dad is 83, lives in Cape Cod and he still works. He does part-time driving for car dealerships, so watch out on the roads [all laughs] because he's tooling around. And I will say my mother was not – she had a high school education but – and I have a older sister, nine years older than myself, and education was real important to her. I think if she was born in a different time she would have absolutely gone for her college degree. I can remember talking to her maybe when she was in her 40s or 50s and encouraging her, 'Oh you should go back to school,' because she loved working in the schools and certainly coached us through our education. But I think it was another time and I think she was very happy but she came from that traditional, traditionalist era and so never went back, which is too bad. [JP: aw]

JP: Before we started you talked about how you lived in Connecticut, is that where you lived for most of your life?

LW: Yeah, I did, I lived there - well I lived there, I'll say until I was 18, for my entire youth and then I came to Assumption College and I then I never left the Worcester [Massachusetts] area [all laughs], and I've been in Central Massachusetts ever since. It's funny when I came here, I can remember thinking I will never stay in Central Massachusetts, I want to get out of Worcester, and I've never left. [laughs] That has been a good decision, I've had a lot of really positive experiences and I love the area. Now I guess, from that perspective I've spent more time in Central Massachusetts than I have in Connecticut. [laughs]

JP: The next question was, what is your connection to Worcester [Massachusetts], so you went to Assumption...

LW: Yeah! It was.

JP: So was that your first connection?

LW: Yeah, you know, when I went to Assumption College – I went to Assumption College, I came on a tour, really liked it and then at the same time I specifically came here – I had a friend's older brother who had graduated from here, so he wasn't here when I came and he helped – he gave me the tour but then the other deciding factor for me was, no one from my high school was coming here. [laughs] And I was one of the first – I grew up in a small town – and I was one of the first people to come here. And since then I know a lot of, you know, over the years have come but it was great experience for me and it was a good choice, and yeah that's what pretty much brought me here.

JP: What major historical events in Worcester have occurred during your time here?

LW: Oh I hope I can remember them, wow. Well the first one that comes to mind is the horrible warehouse fire that – God, how many years ago was that, my kids were little, I mean they have monuments up for it now but we lost eight to nine firefighters and that was big news and that was a time I can really remember the entire community really pulling together, so definitely that. I can, well I can remember the opening of – it was called The Worcester Galleria, okay, and it was a big mall. It was big news, it had a Macy's, and I know you guys probably can't even imagine that right now but it had all the flagship stores in it. And it opened at the Worcester Galleria and so that was a big shopping, you know big shopping plaza for us. And the big issue with that, which this is so Central Massachusetts, so they had a parking garage that was in the city and people were mad they had to pay for parking, it was dollar. [laughs] And that failed obviously which I still find a mystery, I have a business background, I teach business and when you look at the demographics of this area, there is certain the socio income level to support that kind of mall and it failed, and I just – I mean there are a lot of issues maybe why but it doesn't add up to me so I do remember that, that was kind of historical. [laughs] I also you know attended the first opening event at the Hanover, [____??] and that is just, God that is such an addition to our city, but that was such an exciting time to be at that first opening show, and since I've attended a lot of events. But I also remember going there as a college student when it was just a showcase cinema [JP: laughs] and so it amazing to go in and see what was behind those walls because they had to tear down walls and existing ceilings and apart of the history really still really existed. And I hope they continue to develop that part of the city, it's just an important part of our arts and they've had some wonderful programs. Those come to mind, I can't think of anything else. [laughs]

JP: What challenges do you think the city still faces and do you think you'd change anything about the city?

LW: Well I think they do face that challenge of – and I like to shop [all laughs] and I don't understand why I have to drive to Solomon Pond or Natick or you know. Although Blackstone is very successful now, but I still don't understand as the second largest city in the state, why we can not sustain – I don't get it, that is a completely female view, so that I always find perplexing. I think Worcester – although with that said we have some dynamic environments and I think when people from outside come, especially that Shrewsbury Street area, we have a lot of fantastic restaurants. And so when I have friends come from out of town and visit they always say, like every time we go out, 'Oh my God, you guys have some unbelievable restaurants.' And we do so I don't think that gets promoted outside the city as part of our destination. I would like to see – the DCU continues to thrive, that's good, that is a pretty big entertainment venue here in the city. I would like to see the downtown area revitalized because as the second largest city, I – at the end of the day that place shuts down downtown. That's not – like some the outlying areas, you know Shrewsbury Street and things like that, but it seems to me as a city, the downtown area ought to be thriving and when you go to other cities around the country

the downtown area is thriving and ours is more like a ghost town. And so that would be some of my observations.

JP: What distinct characteristics make Worcester the place is today? You said the restaurants but...

LW: Definitely the restaurants but then I'm going to – I guess I'll back up, I don't know how many colleges we used to, when I was in school – gosh, I should keep track of this I mean I teach at Nichols College – we have a lot of schools in this area, so we are a student destination. I can tell the difference, like when all of you return in the fall, [laughs] but I think that's great, I think that's a vibrant, I think that's a vibrant part of our city. And then with the Tufts Veterinary school coming in and so what else, UMASS is it the Eyes and Ears downtown? Anyway, education is a big part of our city, or Central Massachusetts and I think that's great and important. What other characteristics? Of course going through 290, those triple deckers, [laughs] everyone talks about those, they are like 'Oh my God, those really are there?' [laughs] Yes they are! I lived in one when I was in college [laughs], my senior year, they are a very neat piece of architecture. The restaurants I talked about and I think a lot of our outlining suburbs are beautiful, its New England and fall, very rich and vibrant surrounding communities.

JP: What historical events have impacted you while growing up?

LW: Well you know what? The first thing that comes to mind - so I'm going to share this, I can't believe I'm going to tell you how old I am, [DC laughs] but I turned 50 on Friday so I was born one week after JFK was shot and killed. And that is a part of me growing up that was always talked about because – I told you my sister was nine years older, she was released from school early that day and she came home, and so my mother is sitting there with a newborn infant and she says, 'What are you doing home?' and my sister said, 'The President has been shot and they sent us home from school,' and my mother was close to punishing her, telling her she was a liar, like, 'How dare you say that?' But then my mother looked outside, we lived on a street where students walked to school and she could see the other kids so she threw on the TV and it was all over the news. Which I think that would never happen in today's environment because right? We are always connected, we'd know instantly, but here's my mother at home with a newborn infant. I've watched that, that's just apart of the history. Other significant parts, certainly growing up, the Vietnam War. I have distinct memories of my – certainly people I knew, older brothers and sisters of friends who serviced in the war. And then also that was – especially wars that we've have since as an adult, it was part of – my dad would come home from work and the first thing he would do was throw on the nightly news to get those reports. I can remember thinking, 'I don't want to watch this' [laughs] can't we watch my show or – there weren't a whole lot to chose from back than. But that's compared to – that was hearing from ____??. So I'll fast forward to another experience, it was the space shuttle, so that was 1985. I had just graduated Assumption, I had my first job and I was out to lunch with business associates and we were sitting in a

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downtown deli and the TV was on. And everyone was watching the launch because it was so historic and we saw – I saw it live blow up and the whole deli just kind of stopped and everyone said, ‘What just happened?’ And so that was powerful, to just be watching it when it happened didn’t have to see the replay and to know that they had just lost all those astronauts. So that’s 1985, a lot has certainly happened. The Berlin Wall coming down, I can remember that. I’ll think of some others. Oh and I guess you know what? I talk about the election of the first African American that’s – I’d like to see a woman get in there.

DC: I know.

JP: Yup! [everyone laughs]

LW: I was torn, I really wanted Hillary, I have to admit.

DC: Me too. [laughs]

LW: Yeah! Yeah! You know what I think? I will tell you, I think we as a country we are more stereotypical or race – racist isn’t the right word, but discriminating against women than we are race. I think those stereotypes are harder to overcome than the race and I still think – I think – cause I look back, I followed it pretty closely even from a female perspective. The media crucified – she couldn’t do anything right, one day she had a yellow suit on, oh that’s not professional enough. Okay, so then she’d change her – she’d be in navy blue, oh now she’s not feminine enough. It was just if you’d track what the – and nothing was ever said about the male candidate clothing or what they are doing. So I think it’s interesting, and there has been some research on that too, it’s a harder stereotype to overcome than the race, which in today’s day it is kind of ironic. [JP laughs]

JP: So we are going to switch topics to education, you attended Assumption College, what did you major in when you were here?

LW: I was a political science major and I thought I was going to be a lawyer [laughs], which is why I majored in political science. I did take, and I know they still have it, they even have it at my school, the Washington Center, so I did a semester in Washington D.C. [JP: oh yeah!], which was a great experience, one of the – it was just great, I met friends there that I am still friendly with. But it was good for me to live in another city in the country. I didn’t go to law school because I needed money so I went to work [laughs]. And then my company had tuition reimbursement. So they would not reimburse for a legal degree but they would reimburse for a masters in business because it was related. So that’s why – so I said, ‘Well, you know what?’ I know I want an advanced degree so that’s kind of where I made that shift and I did like working in business and so that’s how that happened. [JP laughs]

JP: How do you think clothing and fashion has changed since you were in school to us, like in college now?

LW: You know, I am in higher education and so I say to people a lot of time I've become immune to you folks and in many ways I don't think all that different because the one thing I like about teaching, it keeps me in touch with what younger people are doing. So the equivalent – okay so yoga pants are popular right? And so the equivalent of that when we were in school, they had leggings and leg warmers which have come back, who would have thought that? [laughs] Or sweatpants, so we absolutely did dress comfortably. The other thing I have seen come back is Lacoste, oh that was so big, the preppy look and now everyone has got that. So I guess, I don't think a lot. The one thing, maybe because I'm at a business – maybe because I teach at a business school we do require our students to wear business attire a lot of times for presentations, I'm not sure if that happens, so that might have an experience I didn't have as an undergrad. But I think in many ways, while your generation is absolutely different I think in a lot of ways I think you're very much alike. [laughs] So I love seeing – oh you know what? This is funny, I just saw a picture somewhere and I say to my students, I said, 'Please tell me belly shirts are not coming back in.' [all laughs] There was something on social media – I said, 'Tell me that phase is not coming back because that was about, I don't know, six or seven years ago, and I thought oh man!' So there was a period when I'd be in the classroom thinking I didn't know where to put my eyes so I'm sure the young men did not either. [all laughs] So we got out of that, and then I saw something on social media the other day and I was asking my students and my students said, 'Oh no, I don't think so, that must have been a free thing.' So I said, 'Okay, good.' So [laughs] I'm pleased with what you guys are doing right now.

JP: Oh, well that's good to hear!

LW: Yeah. [all laughs]

JP: If there were any challenges in your education, what were they?

LW: I think the biggest challenge, and I think I still see that for students today, is when you first come in, that social adjustment. And I remember being, you know this is the first time you're living away from home and so your whole first year you're trying to kind of find yourself and get with a group of people and then who am I going to live with. I used to hate that rooming process every year that was so stressful right? And I see that even in my students today, they can't even concentrate in class because that's so important, where you live and your surroundings right? That drives your happiness and if they're not happy where they're living, they are going to be miserable in the classroom. So I do – so I can remember that. I can remember being nervous senior year, just very excited, it was a fun year, you know senior week all that but just then that pressure of I've got to get a job, what is going to happen. And so I don't see that changing a lot from today's students. I actually think today's students have more stressors than I probably

did, I really do. Social media creates – I love social media but I think it creates a lot of stress, and I see it, I see it in my own children, I see it in students, and so that’s something I’m almost grateful I didn’t have to deal with. And then I hated, cause then I went on to – I hated those GMATs, GREs [laughs], right? Those are stressful but if you want the education you have to go through with it. So I think the challenges were more a lot of time were social, and certainly had hard academic courses but somehow managed to get through them.

JP: Since you didn’t really have social media, what other networks and mentoring were important to you?

LW: Yup. So we didn’t have social media and therefore I think we made, we made a point to have more what I would call rituals every week, for gathering. Because I can look back and I’m sure you folks do, but it was like an understanding that – well Thursday nights, we had an on campus pub which was nice, it brought everyone together and you still have to be legal and things to get in, but that was very central. So there were central gathering spots and if certain events occurred you knew where to go, so that is unwritten rules and the culture. I feel like students weren’t as isolated, I think sometimes social media can isolate students. Instead of getting out and going to– and so right, it didn’t matter what the campus event was we would just go because what else were we going to do? And I think the attitude today is, oh that doesn’t interest me, I can be more interested on social media, on my computer, on the Internet, and we didn’t have that, so it was – we really sought out entertainment and social gatherings and so I think that’s been a little bit of a shift.

JP: Yeah. What areas and careers did you wish to pursue after college?

LW: So, really I’ll tell you, I didn’t have a very good focus, I really just wanted a job. [laughs] And I told you I had thought about going to law school but knew I didn’t so I was going to go into business because that’s where you can make some money. And what I did was, I really capitalized, I was a resident assistant. And so I said, ‘Well I don’t have much’ – I had taken a few business courses but I had to capitalize on that and I did, saying that I had to ability to manage and supervise. And so my first job was at a large financial services company as a supervisor in the mailroom. And I will tell you that – I know that doesn’t sound glamorous [JP and DC laughs] and believe me it was not, but I also saw it as, this is how I’m going to get into management and get real experience. And you know what? It paid off because I did it for one year and it was the first time they had hired someone with a college education to manage that unit. And I’m not saying - well maybe that offered me some other skills, but I paid my dues there for a year and then was promoted into the customer service areas and then eventually went into Human Resources. So I always say that RA [resident assistant] experience that gave me leadership experience absolutely helped me in the business environment. And then I was able to pick up the business information, I think I am a fast learner, and then I got my – I enrolled in a masters in business. And I did do that because as I moved through the ranks

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I didn't like being at a disadvantage to the people who had a finance degrees, economics, I wanted to know what they were talking about around the table. And back then, in the 80s to, women in business – I mean, I don't know if I suffered discrimination but there were certainly more stereotypes. So that was part of my motivation to get an MBA, I wanted to know what was being talked about, I wanted to be able to throw those terms around, and establish myself, so that's kind of what led me there.

DC: So now we'll continue with your career.

LW: Okay.

DC: Can you explain to us what you do as an occupation now?

LW: Sure. My title right now is I'm the Associate Dean of Business Studies and Program Chair of Business Communication at Nichols College. So I'll tell you how I got into higher education. How I made the leap from business to higher education. I worked – I've got probably over 20 years business experience primarily leading projects as well as training and development. So developing training programs for midlevel managers and above. I was I guess you call a victim of merger and acquisition which is pretty common and so my department was downsized and I will say [clears throat] excuse me, I got the best corporate deal in America. They gave me a year severance. And at the time my youngest daughter was two and I said well you know what, I'm going to take advantage of this; this is my opportunity to stay home with my children. And three months in maybe two to three months in by 9:00AM my house was clean, dinner was ready, and I was kind of losing my mind. And I thought this is not for me. [All laugh] This kid's looking at me like, "Okay what are we doing next mom?" because my oldest was already in kindergarten or school. So, it—and—it really, you know sometimes—the opportunity—so I had a friend, a good friend say, "You know what? You should teach. You've got all this training and development experience why don't you try to do that part time until something comes up." And I said, "Well, that's kind of a good idea." So I applied at the community college – Quinsigamond Community College and to be honest with you I got a call the day before the class started to teach business math. And I remember the guy calling me and I said, "Oh I don't want that." Because I wanted to teach management marketing and I said, "Oh I'm sorry." I said "That's not my specialty." And he responded to me and kind of shamed me into. He said, "Well you have a masters in business you must know math." And I thought, yeah I do. So I took it. And it was the best thing I could have ever done because it was a business math class for women who were on welfare and they were trying to get them off. So it was a federal funded program and let me tell you teaching that class, I was grateful for my education. But just a great group of women but they didn't know how to balance a checkbook, they didn't—they didn't understand that .5 on the deli scale meant a half pound. So it was really teaching them life skills. So that worked out okay. And I—you know, and so I touched base with that Dean after that. After that I said, "w=Well I really like that I'll do it again" I said, "but I'll teach other business classes." And he said "That's good because we don't have any

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women on our staff to teach business.” So I just think timing again, was on my side. And I started teaching there—I taught there for I don’t know four, five years. And believe it or not I taught here at Assumption College in the business studies department. A fulltime position came open while I was teaching here—and then I started teaching here part time doing human resource management, marketing and management and then I was here full time for five years. And I loved it. It was great to be back at my alma mater I even knew some of the professors. [All laugh]. And—but then this—a position came at Nichols College to head up their communications program. And so I applied because it was a good opportunity for me to get a leadership position and develop a program from scratch. And now I’ve been there nine years. And most recently almost two years ago moved into the associate dean position. Its very exciting developing new programs have grown the communications program out there. And I love it. So I’m teaching business, which I’ve grown—I do love, I have my masters. And eventually, I’m so busy right now I haven’t had the time, but I’ve looked into getting a terminal degree as well.

DC: What has this work meant to you?

LW: I love it. You know what? I—I do I—I think I’m fortunate and I actually had a friend say this to me when she was going through a particularly hard time she said, “You are so lucky that you get up and you—you like to go to work.” And I do. I never have a day where I think “ugh” I mean some days I’m tired but I [laughs] I never—I love going in. I think working with this age group absolutely keeps me current. And you know, I have friends that will say to me when you know I’m out with friends and I’ll say something there and they’ll say, “How do you know that?” and I’ll say, “Because I’m with 18-20 year olds all day.” And it’s great to have an impact. I’m still friends with a lot of my students as they graduate I’m in touch with them. So I do, I love social media even though I kind of talked about it, but I love connecting with them and watching their lives advance. And you know, the greatest reward is when I get a note from any of them saying, “I thought of you today” or “Here’s what I’m doing and thank you, you were right.” And, so that’s very rewarding for me. I suppose—and I had opportunity to return to the corporate environment, I could probably be making twice the money. But the lifestyle and just the rewards are great. So I – it’s very fulfilling to work with that age group, have an impact and I think I’m learning, I know, I will say—I’m sure you guys have teachers too but—if I’m in the class, I mean I do okay with technology but sometimes I’ll just say, “You know what? I don’t know. You guys have to come.” And it’s amazing the stuff you guys learn and know.

DC: How would you define success in your life and has this definition changed over time?

LW: Yeah it definitely has changed over time. How I would define it today is when everything is in balance. So, I like to think of my life like a wheel with spokes. And so each spoke is something different in your life, you know, like: family, friends, your job, exercise, entertainment. But when one of those is out of balance it’s a broken spoke so

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that means the wheel kind of goes jagged. So, when one of those – that’s why I try to keep all of those in balance, and that’s almost impossible by the way.

DC and JP: [laugh]

LW: But it is good to weigh, okay I have to you know, I have to put more emphasis on my job but you know what? I in three weeks from now then I have to readjust that. I think balance is so important. And it has changed, you know when I first graduated it was work, work, work, work, work, work and completing my degree and then, obviously when I had my daughters... When they were young, it’s hard raising a young family and balancing work and wanting to spend time and make sure their well-being is always paramount, even now. So just – I think but right now if everything is kind of in balance I’m feeling like, wow that’s a good day. [all laugh]

DC: What priorities, responsibilities, roles or interest do you have in your household?

LW: In my household?

DC: Yeah

LW: Well I’m in charge of course, no [laughs]. I wish my family members were here to tell you. You now what, I will say, I just—I’ll say everything—I guess this would be very traditional. Everything inside the house is mine and everything outside the house is his. My husband is also very handy so that’s great. Like I can say, “Hey, I want a new shelf here.” He’s like, “Great.” He always needs a project, so that’s—that’s good but he loves work—he does all the yard work, and I’m happy to let him do that. But I will tell you he is a horrible financial manager. I am in charge of all our finances. And they have a saying in my house, like if something’s going on, like my girl, he’ll say you better not let that lady know that you’re doing that. [All laugh]. And I’m that lady [laughs], that lady is not going to be happy about that. So, so I do, I manage that. With that said my husband is also—he’s so a great cook so he will often, if I’m coming home late or whatever, he will do that. But I would still say I would do predominantly all the cleaning. But he helps if I ask, he’s pretty good.

DC: You talked a lot about the pros of your career are there any cons?

LW: Yeah sure, there are a lot of pros, but well I guess the finances. Some times I think that oh you know...I guess I only think that like if I’m having a stressful time at work, oh it’s not worth it. I could be making twice the money and have the same amount of stress but that’s not—that’s a very shortsighted view and I know that. I guess in higher education we have a reputation, change happens slow, and that’s at every—I you know, I you know, at other schools, so I know that’s typical and I have the type of personality [bangs table] let’s do it today. Okay this is a great idea let’s get this implicated and let’s do that and that’s so contrary – that’s a business focus and that’s so contrary to usually

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higher education. So I've had to kind of adjust, so sometimes that can be a little frustrating.

DC: What does your husband do?

LW: He is in public administration. He is the director of public works in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. And, so he—and so a director of public works they oversee anything: streets, garbage collection, so he has staff of about thirty. But he's also in charge, because it's Hopkinton of the Boston Marathon.

DC: Oh, yeah.

LW: So, that's kind of an interesting aspect. And that thing runs like a clock. It really is fascinating how they mobilize and get that thing up and running. And then especially with the events of last year—and it will be interesting to see how it goes this year.

DC: Do you consider—you've talked a little bit about politics—but do you consider yourself to active politically?

LW: Not really, not as much—not compared to some people. And I – I a lot of times I take the middle of the road, I'm an Independent. So I'm not really – I guess I mentioned Hillary – I just think because you know as a woman I guess I was a little more active. I got so angry I guess with other female friends when they badmouthed her. Because I was like, my God, I think women are horrible sometimes to one another. And I don't understand why there wasn't more of a sisterhood for her. Of course political ideas were underlying that and I get that. I'd like to think I'm a more conservative Democrat. You know, here's the other frustrating thing, so I have been siding more with the Republicans and my theory on why Romney didn't win, and I still can't believe his wife – he had so many policies against – that weren't advantageous for women. And I thought, you alienated 50% of your target market just by that one, you know, that one thing. I couldn't believe his wife didn't advise him better. So, I wish they had had a Republican—a better republican in I guess. But I'm not real—I don't want to get in a debate [laughs].

DC: Have you been involved in the community with volunteer work?

LW: I have actually, I've been a little slow as of late, but I used to be very active in a weekend food pantry. And that was—and for a long time I was the chair of it. And it was an emergency food shelter and it was only open on Saturday and it was the only food pantry open on the weekends in the city and only open from like 9:00-12:00 on Saturday mornings. And that was very rewarding and I used to bring my daughters with me too but really saw all walks of life. And so that was very rewarding and I've kind of gotten out of that and I've been active with my church. But I would like to get more involved because I think it's an important aspect for the community.

DC: What other activities are you involved in?

LW: Well, I should be more involved but I do, I'll say just personal physical fitness. So that's something that I'm involved in. And I'm involved a lot of what I would call extra curricular activities through my job. So I do attend a lot of student events at night; the cultural events like if we have speakers coming on. And so that does take up a lot of my time. I'm probably on campus, I don't know, two nights a week and then even on weekends so I guess kind of crosses over with my job; and then with my church.

DC: Yeah, so you talked about how you raised your children with religion but did you want to elaborate more with how religion plays a role in your life today?

LW: Mhmm, sure. I would say I'm not a—I'm not the best; I'm not there every single Sunday. That's my Catholic roots confession. But I have a strong faith—or spiritual—you know I look to that and I—when I'm going—and that's not the time to practice your faith when you're going through hard times but I you know—to only rely on it during hard times but I find, I find it gives me strength because I have that attitude when you're going through something hard you just have to work through it. Like something will guide you if you stay loyal to those values that you've been through and will get you to the other side and almost anytime when I've and an obstacle or a tough time in my that's kind of the approach I've taken and it has worked to just you know, work through it, stay true to your values. I would say I probably go to church once or twice a month. I enjoy it, I do it—of course I enjoy the social aspect of it. That's—I'm also I serve—I guess this is one other thing, and this probably drives me to attend more but they have a position called “ushers” so it's late people—who great people. I love that that's social. So I do that you know, twice a month, serve as an usher. But that's how you get to know so many people you know, in the community, which, that has been very rewarding. And then participating in a lot of those social events and the other thing I do love too, being affiliated like that, the community service projects that they do. So it's an opportunity—you know I just I guess it keeps me focused this time of the year too, you know, they'll have, they call it, an angel project. So I always take two ornaments, thinking of children who aren't going to have gifts. So I like that it just keeps me connected to that aweness. And I would like to get more involved, they also have some, they do some, actually they did a youth trip last year down to Long Island where hurricane sandy hit and they're going back this summer, still helping people recover from that. So that's something I would like to participate in someday.

DC: What are your experiences in accessing quality and affordable health care? It's you know, kind of a relevant topic today.

LW: Yeah that's a good question. Can you say that again?

DC: Just your experience with accessing quality health care that's also affordable.

LW: Okay, do you mean so I have access to it?

DC: Yeah.

LW: Okay you know what, here – okay, so I’m fortunate I’ve had jobs that provide me with very great health care benefits. (sighs) So I’ll share a story with you. I’m nervous about health care in this country. And, you guys, I probably will too... My father had—my mother died of breast cancer and received very good care, but I saw the bills. And luckily my dad had great Medicare and just a good pension and things like that so it didn’t decimate their savings. But I can tell you it was in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, her care. And that scares me, that, that money will dry up. And what type of quality of care—and I do think we have a cast society to a certain extent to this country because when you look at who gets excellent health care it’s celebrities and athletes. And so, you know, God forbid—I’m going to use this story, I’m sure you guys saw it, when Beyonce had a baby and she had a private suite in Mount Sinai in New York city. They closed down and entire wing for her. Giving birth is not all that special I mean people have been doing it right [laughs]. We’re all built the same way. But I think that’s horrible; people were displaced. And by the way what about all the other women that were delivering babies that day, their babies maybe didn’t get the same care, their families couldn’t come in and look at the window, they had to move the nursery; I find that appalling. So I think moving forward, getting affordable will really only be for upper—well middle class and upper middle class depending on their job. Dental care is very exclusive, right, because a lot of companies do not follow that, dental care falls under there; I think even eye care, the way some of these policies are written and eyeglasses are so expensive. It’s creating—I think it’s creating a great divide of the have and have nots and that’s disturbing you know, if someone becomes ill.

DC: So we’re just going to kind of do a little conclusion section.

LW: Okay, sure.

DC: How do you feel about the choices you’ve made in your life? Do you have any regrets?

LW: I try not to have any regrets because first of all you can’t fix what happens and you have to learn from them. I honestly, I know that sounds really – I’ll use the example, I’ll put it out there – so I was divorced, and do I have any regrets about that? The only regret I have is maybe the emotional distress it caused, you know, my ex-husband, my daughters, and myself. But I will tell you I do not regret marrying him, I have two beautiful daughters, he was a good man, my decision was sound when I married him. So that’s how I look at it. Do I regret not going to law school, well, maybe. But then I turned that around and said, “Well now I’m going to go for my masters in business.” So I try to say – I try to tell my daughters that. You can’t have any regrets, your life

experiences create who you will be and how you move forward so that's kind of how I try to move forward.

DC: Based on your life experiences what advice would you give to women today as well as future generations?

LW: Wow, that's good. So, okay so here's what I'll tell you. I think your reputation is your most valuable asset. Doesn't matter what you do, where you go, and I mean just your reputation at work, because that can encompass a lot of things, but your reputation will follow you in whatever industry you enter. And that's the beauty of networking, so your reputation, you'll meet someone when you least expect it and if you have lived true to your core values they'll say, "Oh, I'll recommend you for that." So I just, I tell people, or my students too, your reputation is your most valuable asset. The second piece of advice is to just take advantage of every opportunity you have. Okay so that's pretty easy, but what I'm saying is, if you have the opportunity for instance, if someone says to you, "Hey, I have free tickets to the Boston opera to night. Do you want to go?" Now I know what an 18 year old is thinking or 20 like, [mocks shuddering sounds]. You know what? Go. Go so you can say, "I was there, I saw how people were dressed, I had the experience." And if you never go again that's okay but you can say you went. It creates an experience that you can talk about and you can make that a fun event. You go with the attitude, I'm going to go, I'm going to try it out, and then I'm going to go for a great dinner after words or something along those lines. But if someone offers you that opportunity – when you are comfortable you are not learning and you are not pushing yourself. So sometimes you'll be offered an opportunity, and I think women do this, they say, "Oh my God I couldn't possibly do that," because I think we underestimate what we can do. And so what I would say to you is, "Do it. Put yourself outside of your comfort zone and give it a try. And I will add, a man would never respond that way. Like if someone said to them – and I teach gender communication, and I even see it in the class – if someone says to a man, "Hey, you should try" a guy responds, "Oh sure okay I can do it." And that's the attitude. We absolutely can do it but there's always that self-doubt. So I would say, you know, put yourself outside of your comfort zone and take advantage of those opportunities. And then build yourself a wide network. You know one thing I try, I pride myself on, and I've had friends say this to me, I have an eclectic group of friends. And I've had people say, like if they've come to my house, and I'm having a Christmas party they'll say, "Oh this is great but kind of crazy bunch—like a real dichotomy of professions and personalities." And I think that's great, you don't close yourself off from any opportunity. So you know expose yourself to different types of people and that creates more opportunities and network. Have you guys heard of the book *Lean In* by [Sheryl] Sandberg? She is the CFO right now at Facebook and prior to that she was at Google.

JP: Yeah, we had to read an article.

DC: Oh yeah.

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LW: So I love her. Okay, you know, I read her book – I know you guys are busy and don't have time to read but, she also has a great interview, is a Ted talk? There's some interview of her online or you can go to her website and see her interview. You know what I loved about her? She about 43, 45 years old; she is a powerhouse. And so a lot of women have criticized her and said, "Oh my God" you know, she's worth millions of dollars. And a lot of women criticize her and say "She's not a good mother." And I push back and I say no she is a good mother she's just mothering differently or she's taking very good—when you read the book. So it's a totally, it might be a different point of view but what I found interesting about her and this whole thing about gender communication and women have to be more positive – when she was offered her position at Facebook – so say Mark Zuckerberg offered her I don't know, 3.4 million dollars and she's thinking, "Wow this is great," because she was making 2.4 at Google, I don't know if those are accurate numbers. But she's all excited and she goes home right, she's offered all of these millions of dollars to work at Facebook and she goes home to her husband and says, "I was offered this I'm calling them tomorrow and I'm going to accept it." And her husband replied, who is a very successful executive, and goes "No you're not. Because no man would call and accept the first offer. You're going to call and you're going to ask for more." And I thought that was interesting because even at that level in an organization we're poor negotiators or we say, "That's enough." Where as a male would come out saying, "No, no, I'm worth more." By the way, don't do that for your first job. [all laugh] Do take whatever [??] gave you, you can't pull that at your first job. But then as you move forward—that to me was very enlightening. When I read that I thought wow that's so true. And I've seen it happen. You know, I do a lot of hiring and when I make offers to women they almost always say, "Oh thank you I'm so excited to work here." Almost always the men will come back and say, "I want this." And we have to haggle back and forth. So I have found that to be true. So that's my advice, I don't know, I hope that helps.

JP: Now we talked about that in class.

LW: Did you?

DC: Yeah we did.

JP: So that's really interesting.

LW: Yeah, and you know what, watch yourselves just how you communicate with your male peers or watch how they perform in class. They have seemingly, I mean I think we're all hardwired differently but they will take a challenge. Like, women want to be a 100% sure before they take that challenge. And so I guess I'm saying and you know what, I have fallen into that as well – take the risk. Even in jobs that are available in corporate at the next level up men well will look at the job description and the qualifications and even if they don't – like a women will look at it and say, "Oh I have to

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have all of those qualifications to apply.” Well, no you don’t, I mean it’s the 80:20 rule, where as a man will look at that and say, “Well I can do half of that. I’m going to apply,” and he might get the job and for good reason. So I think it’s just a changing of our point of view.

DC: So, we’re working to tell a fuller story of women in history; do you think there’s anything else you’d like to include, about yourself, future generations, past generations.

LW: Yeah, well I mean, oh God I have to think of something profound. You should have given me that ahead of time, no, let me just think a minute. So we talked about advice – well I think it doesn’t matter, male or female having an education will absolutely change the quality of your life and it’s proven there’s enough research out there. And that might be something – so that is just so imperative because women cannot, because women cannot – men uneducated can still get higher earning wages, do to manual labor and things like that. But when you look at the poverty level in the United States it is primarily uneducated single women with children. And so education is just always, you know, it’s always going to be a value. I guess the conflict right now, as a government right now is the federal loan, we’re making it harder and harder for everyone to get an education due to the financial aid situation. So I would reinforce that. I guess not...I hope you can pull out some pearls of wisdom. I guess, you know what, I guess the other thing, I guess my final thing is women are the strength – the strength of being a women is that we focus on relationships and the creation of positive relationships and that’s how we communicate and it I think that’s a strength. But sometimes to our detriment we focus on trying to improve relationships that are not positive forces in our life. And I think my advice to all young women would be to surround yourself with people who support you and your goals and add positive energy to your life. And if someone is not doing that it is okay to cut them out of your life and we’re not good at that because we want to maintain that relationship. But I would push back and say – and that can be a female or a male acquaintance or friend or whatever the relationship is but that can drag us down more so than anything else. So just that surround ourself with people who support our goals.

DC: Alright.

JP: Well thank you for sharing.

LW: You’re most welcome.