

Lived Experience

My grandparents were immigrants from Ireland in the early 1900's. They settled in one of the many working-class neighborhoods in Boston that were built around churches, and where everyone attended the Catholic schools associated with that church. I grew up in the Mission Hill neighborhood of Roxbury. My sister and I were raised on a street with six of my father's siblings and their families with a formative experience of extended family. My father passed away suddenly when I was nine years old and our lives changed markedly. My mother worked hard as a single parent for many decades thereafter, and she raised us with strength and grace. Her example showed my sister and me how to become strong, independent women. And, like many teenagers in the neighborhood, we both went to work at 14 years old with jobs at the nearby hospitals.



The working-class neighborhoods in many cities at the time were segregated according to country of origin, and mine was no exception. This was a time and place when it was considered a "mixed marriage" for Irish and Italian people to marry. The collective consciousness of my community was focused on the (sometimes violent) rivalries of our predominantly white neighborhoods. However, while I was in high school, the larger city of Boston underwent the racial strife of the "busing crisis," which began to expand my awareness of racial segregation and its many impactful inequalities.

The value of working hard was ingrained in me, and I loved learning. I also loved the field of psychology; I had become fascinated with human behavior and child development. I aspired to obtain a doctoral degree in psychology by the time I graduated from high school. The first in my family to attend college, I was fortunate to be awarded a scholarship to attend Clark University based on financial need. When I began college, I realized the limitations of having been raised in a homogenous neighborhood and having attended schools where few teachers were college-educated.



Attending Clark afforded me the opportunity to conduct independent research in developmental psychology as an undergraduate. And although my family cautioned that it "was not a good idea" to attend graduate school (due to cost), I went on to obtain my Ph.D. in clinical psychology at the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. Indeed, graduate school for me was entirely funded by student loans and teaching apprenticeships; I would not pay off my student loan debt for more than a decade after graduation. It was during graduate school that I began to pursue more specialized interests, all of which stemmed from an appreciation of the impact of early experience – namely, child advocacy/public policy and the newly established field of pediatric psychology.

I completed my internship at Children's Hospital of Boston/Judge Baker Children's Center, followed by Fellowships in Child Psychology and the Law at Judge Baker and in Pediatric Psychology at Dana Farber Cancer Institute - carrying an appointment in psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. Ironically, these training sites were literally adjacent to the neighborhood where I grew up. It was poignant to experience the juxtaposition of the many meaningful personal and professional relationships I had made through education while feeling continued loyalty to the people and place of my development. After my training was complete, I returned to Washington D.C. and began my first professional position at Children's National Medical Center. This enhanced my exposure to different cultures and international populations exponentially.



My early hardships led to my work ethic and value for service and leadership. Yet it has been (and will continue to be) a continuous learning process for me to recognize the many opportunities that I have had relative to others. Although my family did not have material wealth, I did have privileges that came from being a white person who had access to opportunities that were not available to all.



I have described here a few trajectories of my lived experience: education as a means to overcome socioeconomic hardship; awareness of cultural diversity, race and privilege; and a deep appreciation for psychology and its many applications. *I still love psychology*, and I would be honored to bring my experience and skills to lead APA as President in 2023. If I am fortunate enough to be elected, I am committed to doing the hard work, both personally and professionally, to continue to learn, grow, and contribute. The foundation for my leadership will be collaboration, wherein *all* of psychology can be brought to bear on improving societal wellbeing, where all of psychological science and practice can be celebrated, and where concentrated efforts are made to build a psychology workforce that resembles our society.