

Rebecca Bauer, by Julie M. Luker

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Minnesota

JL: Julie Luker

RB: Rebecca Bauer

JL: This is an interview conducted as part of a larger faculty and student research project initiated by Dr. Julie Luker of Concordia University, Saint Paul. Today is Tuesday, June 20th, 2023, and I'm here with Rebecca Bauer. My name is Julie Luker, and I am an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Concordia. Today, I'll be talking to Rebecca about what life was like growing up in the Twin Cities. During this interview, I'm going to ask you to reflect on your childhood life experiences as they relate to a variety of social topics from that time period. For the purposes of this interview, we've defined childhood as birth to 17 years of age. So, to begin, if you wouldn't mind, please restate, and spell your full name, including a maiden name if applicable.

RB: Yes, my name is Rebecca, R-E-B-E-C-C-A. My maiden name was Lindmark, L-I-N-D-M-A-R-K. And then my married name is Bauer, B-A-U-E-R.

JL: Thank you. Please identify your race and gender.

RB: I am white, and I am a female.

JL: And please state your date of birth.

RB: December 3, 1965.

JL: Finally, please share where you grew up, such as the name of a neighborhood or a nearby intersection.

RB: I grew up in the Lake Nokomis area around 34th and 52nd Street. So, Nokomis, Keewaydin, and Minnehaha Falls, kind of that general corridor.

JL: Thank you. I'd like to learn more about your family life. So, let's begin with the memories that you have for immediate and extended family. Please share some memories that you have about these relationships.

RB: I grew up in a nuclear family living in a small stucco house in, as I said, until the age of twelve. My dad was a teacher at Minnehaha Academy, where my mother went to high school and everyone else on my maternal side went to high school. He was originally from Iowa, but my parents were married and my mom was an RN at Hennepin County Medical Center. I had a brother, named Brad, who has since passed, who was born in 1970 and two and a half months premature,

and he had severe disabilities resulting from cerebral palsy. So, I had a lot of responsibilities as the older sibling taking care of a disabled brother. My parents remained married. It put a lot of strain on their marriage, among other issues. So, they were married from 1965 through 1978. Then my mother was a single mom living in that same neighborhood. She remained there through the end of her life. She died in 2009.

JL: When your parents divorced, did you go to live with your mother or your father?

RB: We generally had joint custody. My dad lived in the Longfellow neighborhood. He remarried almost immediately and lived with someone in the Longfellow neighborhood family. She originally had five kids. My mom, my brother and I were together in that house in Lake Columbus neighborhood.

JL: Did you have any family pets? If so, could you please describe them?

RB: I think I had a dog when I was really young, but my brother, because of his respiratory issues, it was just really hard to have additional care of an animal. My mom eventually got some dogs and then became a real dog person. While he was with us, we didn't we did not have dogs or cats. Well, that's not true. I did have a cat. I completely forgot about that. When my parents divorced, I begged for a cat and we did have some cats for a couple of years, but I was allergic, so it really didn't work very well.

JL: How were household chores divided between members of your family.

RB: Well, it was just really my mom and me doing the household chores. I can't say that I probably should have been doing more household chores than I was doing, but my mom generally worked 3 to 11, so my job was to get home and work when I was really young. Then we had a babysitter. When my parents were still married, there was a babysitter who would be kind of at the house, a high school girl from probably Roosevelt or one of the neighborhood schools that would come in. When I was older, from middle school through high school, my job was to kind of get home right away after school and get my brother off the bus, and then I would cook dinner for him and not do a very good job of cleanup. I knew my mom would come home from a from a long day in the Hennepin County E.R., and it was like, I feel bad about it now as an adult to think about how I really didn't pull my weight. When it came to like, it must have been hard to come home after, seeing everything and being in that kind of a job and then coming home to a mess. Your teenage daughter hasn't bothered to, you know, clean the dishes from dinner or any of those kind of things. So that was my primary responsibility. I wouldn't say my room was a mess. I really didn't have a lot of chores.

JL: Thank you. Next, please describe the ways in which your family's economic status influenced your childhood.

RB: Well, that's kind of an interesting one. We were definitely different in some ways during those years when my parents were married. We were definitely middle class in what I would call a blue-collar neighborhood. I think most of the people who lived around us did kind of blue-collar jobs. I didn't really ever think about this sort of thing. I didn't ever differentiate my parents as probably being younger than my childhood friends parents, and probably a little more economically mobile. I can't speak to income and how that whole thing worked, but I will say that after the divorce it was much more challenging. I think with child support and a lot of other things like that. So, I think if I had gone to Roosevelt High School or gone someplace else. I went to Minnehaha Academy from grades seven through 12. I think so many of the people who went there had moms that stayed home and dads who had, you know, made much more money, a much more affluent crowd. So, in that way, my economic status looked, you know, substantially more modest than it probably would be

compared to other people in the neighborhood. So, it was it was kind of a contrast. A study in contrasts.

JL: In what way has your family's financial circumstances shaped your spending habits today?

RB: Oh, yeah. I'm always keenly aware of how much things cost. My mom was very open about the bills. You take all of her salary in cash. I think about that now. They didn't have direct deposit; she would put it down. This is what I made, and here is where it's allocated for bills. She said, "This goes to heating, this goes to this..." I had, at a young age, a very strong sense of the budget. We knew we couldn't turn up the heat beyond, whatever it was, 65 or 66 degrees. So, I think that kind of thing stays with you. It wasn't like I didn't know where the next meal was coming from. It was never like that. I think when you're middle class, you're just you. You are just pretty solidly middle class in terms of your thinking. You know, as far as you don't want to spend too much. We just got done putting kids through college. So, I think there's also that sense of being kind of careful.

JL: Now, I'd like to know about your experiences with religion, such as Catholicism, Lutheranism, etc. Describe what you can recall about your family's religious practices when you were growing up.

RB: Well, that's an interesting one. My parents were raised extremely conservatively. So, my dad, Baptist from Iowa, his grandfather was the Baptist minister in town. My mother grew up in Minnesota, her denomination and everyone in her family was Evangelical covenant. So even though my parents, when they met, were sort of rebelling against those practices, they still kind of raised me up. Then we became members of the Christian Covenant Church. So, that was part of my life. I went to Covenant Pines for Bible Camp. I went to Vacation Bible school. I did Sunday School and something called Pioneer Girls on Wednesday night, which would have been like the girls of Covenant version of like Girl Scouts or something, which I did not particularly enjoy. Then Minnehaha Academy was run by The Evangelical is still run by the Evangelical Covenant Church itself. So, my grandparents saw to it that I was very well entrenched in there. Whenever I was there, I spent a lot of time at my grandparents' house in Robbinsdale, went to prayer and daily devotionals. So, religion played a really big part of my life, even though, again, my parents were sort of rebelling and did not necessarily hold to the way that they had been brought up. They wanted to see that I still had the basics.

JL: Well, that leads me to my next question then. What, if any, impact do you feel that religion has now on you as an adult?

RB: Oh, that's a complicated question. I think that in some ways I did some of the same things that my parents did when I raised my kids. They went to Minnehaha Academy. They went to two private schools that were Christian. One went to Marquette University, which is Catholic, and the other one went to North Park University, which is Evangelical Covenant. So, I think that we definitely brought our kids up. Members of a church, as far as I think, there's a sort of time politically right now where I just don't really want to associate myself with any of that. I'm a strong progressive and I just feel like politically, there's so much of an association now with religion and conservatism that it's very hard to know sometimes. Where my own personal faith, my faith, which is strong and just religion as a whole kind of meaning, how I feel very disenfranchised from organized religion.

JL: Now, I'd like to learn more about the neighborhood in which you grew up, and if you moved, which I don't think you moved, but you said your parents were divorced. If you reflect on different neighborhoods, just point those out as you go. If not, just go ahead and share. Please describe what comes to mind when you think about the neighborhood in which you grew up.

RB: I think it was you know, the 1970s. Some of this is about neighborhood and just an era in which kids could just play and be outside all day. I think of just having a lot a lot of children around. We were kids who could just play freely all day, get on their bikes, and just go to Lake Nokomis, or Minnehaha Falls, or hit the bike trails. We were very close to a lot of natural features that were very conducive to childhood. In addition, there was all kinds of things on 34th Avenue to do. There was the corner market where we would buy candy and pop, and it was sort of Norman Rockwell in its own way. There was the Nicodemus branch of the of the public library where I spent so many hours. The supermarket where you did the grocery shopping. There was the bowling alley. I didn't spend a lot of time there, but some of these places were very familiar. Got my haircut at Jan's Beauty Nook. I mean, it was just very small townish. People generally knew each other. I think that now I live in the Bryn Mawr neighborhood of Minneapolis, and I think my neighbors and I know each other much better than I did growing up at that time. However, in terms of just kids and just having kids to play free reign, yeah. I have great memories of being out in the alley and playing Kick the Can or, you know, those kinds of things. I remember having the neighbor across the alley that did daycare. She still lives in the neighborhood doing daycare. So, there was all kinds of things to do at their house. There was always swing sets and all kinds of toys and various things. So, yeah, it was just a really natural time for, just kids being kids.

JL: How far away did you go when you left your house?

RB: Oh, yeah. That's funny, because I think about my kids really and they didn't go more than a couple of blocks. When I was a kid, I don't think there was any specific parameters. We just had to say we were going probably within a couple of miles. We had a range of a couple of miles on bikes.

JL: How safe was your neighborhood when you lived there and what factors do you think made it that way?

RB: I think it was very safe. It was very homogeneous. I don't know why. It was a different era. It was one of the most homogeneous neighborhoods. It's so funny to think about that now, especially as a teacher in the public schools. I think about how, in my school, I think everyone was sort of just this homogeneity when it came to income, race, religion. That was a very, very safe neighborhood. I know that the neighborhood store, the corner market was held up a few times. So, there might have been all kinds of things that went on that I just wasn't aware of. I can't speak to the whys except the fact that it seemed very safe and there was never really any question.

JL: Next, I'd like to learn about the values shared by your family and your neighbors. Values are principles or standards that help guide behavior. What memories come to mind that demonstrate what these values were for your family and your neighbors?

RB: Well, I think that there was the notion but I can't say that it's exactly like how it's been described to me by other kinds of folks who grew up in close community. It was because we all knew each other on the block and everyone knew who I was. If you did something wrong, obviously your parents would find out about it within a relatively short period of time. Not because everyone was so close, but because people knew who you were. So, I think that that speaks to a certain value. I've heard of particular communities of color where the neighbors felt free to use corporal punishment or punish kids or in the extended family. It wasn't so much of that, but it was the idea that definitely things would get back to mom and dad if you misbehaved and you just did it. I mean, you just didn't misbehave because you just knew that. So, in terms of values, I mean, people worked. I think because we're talking about a generally very middle-class white neighborhood of Midwesterners, people generally kept to themselves. I think for the most part, which sounds contradictory, what I'm saying about everyone sort of knowing who you were. Nobody got into each other's business, so to speak.

JL: Okay. Now I'm going to ask you all about leisure time. I'm excited to learn a little bit more about the things that you did. Describe some of the ways in which you, your family and your neighbors engaged in leisure time when you're growing up.

RB: My dad loved camping and fishing and cross-country skiing. He would have us out. There really weren't a lot of times, no matter how inclement the weather, that we weren't out, sledding at Minnehaha Park, which is now the urban area down there, there was a hill that we would go to skating at the rink at [Key Wade?] or the various rinks around the area. Yeah, winter, recreational stuff. Just never inside, no matter how cold it got. When I walked to school, that's just a different subject. We just knew how to bundle up and just brave the cold. I really sound old and stuffy, but that's how we were. I'll tell you, in my day I walked to school and that was really true, though. We put on snowmobile suits. It was like that kid from a Christmas story who was bundled up and couldn't even move, that's how it was. There wasn't a time where my dad in particular didn't have us out doing some kind of biking, hiking, camping, that kind of thing. I don't remember my neighbors doing that as much simply because the fact that my dad was a teacher, he had summers off. I think most of my friends parents were working people. They worked at the Ford plant across the river and Highland Park. They were gone more and they were working more. So, we had that luxury of my dad's summers off to do that.

JL: Did you ever take vacations? If so, where did you go camping. Anything else come to mind?

RB: We went out west, we went to the Black Hills, we went to Glacier National Park. We also went to Rocky Mountain National Park. So, we did the Great Western vacation by car. My dad rode his bike out to Colorado and my mom and I met him out there. He just turned 80. He just turned 82 last week and just did an 82-mile bike ride. He rode his bike with some students from Minnehaha out to out to Colorado and we met him out there. We also took some vacations with my grandparents who spent winter in Florida. We did that a few times just for fun. Yeah, those are primarily the things I recall.

JL: Any type of television shows or music bands, things like that you were into?

RB: Oh, yeah, for sure. Well, as a child, of course, I would come home and turn on the TV that had the four channels that we got that you actually had to manually turn the turn the dial. We weren't so advanced to get a color TV until, I think, the late seventies. As a kid, it was, every manner of things. Gilligan's Island, all those 1960s reruns. Then, I suppose Wonderful World of Disney on Sunday nights. Yeah, just all the 1967 shows that were popular during that time. Yeah, we loved music at my house. My mother was really into classical and my dad really liked the 1960s era rock. I'm thinking back to childhood. Loved everybody from Peter Frampton to Fleetwood Mac. When I got older, I was crazy about Journey and then, of course, Prince. I guess that stage childhood because I was like 18 when Purple Rain came out. Just so many bands, so many vinyls at our house. My brother loved music, too. That was one thing he was just obsessed with. So, he had 45's stacked many, many inches high. With his one hand he would kind of slide those things onto his phonograph record and they inevitably would become scratched and then the needle would stick. So, we'd have to yell, "Stop, Brad!" and he'd have to unstick the needle. Hey Jude was one of those songs that was constantly playing at our house.

JL: Now let's discuss your experience with schooling. Please describe what it was like going to school.

RB: I went to a Minneapolis Public school for grades K-6, which was customary at that time. They didn't really have middle school. There was elementary school and then you had junior high. The year I finished the sixth grade, they closed Minnehaha Elementary. The public school not to be confused with the academy and closed Lake Nokomis Junior High, which was just a block from my house. I think the baby boom was over and they were having to consolidate and then do bussing. I

would have gone to [Sanford?] Middle School and then Roosevelt High School. However, because my dad taught at Minnehaha, I got to go free. The transition from public school to seventh grade through 12th grade was Minnehaha Academy. I generally walked to school and my first two years, I think, we did not even have hot lunch offered at Minneapolis Public Schools. So, you had to go home for lunch. That kind of tells you that at that time the assumption was that there was a parent home to give their kids lunch, which today is just unthinkable. Back then the assumption was that moms would be at home to feed their kids. I think I was in third grade when they added the hot lunch program. That was a big deal.

JL: What did you do when you had to go home and your mom was working?

RB: She didn't work that shift, she worked 3 to 11 so that she could be home. She would just have to work her hours like that. As for anyone else, I don't know what they did. There just that many working moms at that time, which makes me feel old to think about that. I grew up or was a small child at a time when there were so few women working that they actually did not have a hot lunch program. So, you had to go home to eat. I would walk the six blocks of school, walk the six blocks back further back for lunch and then back to school again and then home. I would make four trips every day that half mile. I didn't think much of it because that's what everyone else was doing, too. I loved school. I loved being at school. My mother, really strong, struggled with both depression and chemical addiction that she kept very quiet. This meant school was a place for me to escape and sometimes coming home from school. On those days, what I remember most was sometimes my mother was not sober and it was difficult. I remember there were times that the lunch was not there because she was inebriated. So those were kind of things that people didn't talk about much that at that time. I didn't want to do anything that was going to get me in trouble or say anything. I would have never talked to a teacher. I didn't even want it. I was just afraid that somehow it was going to reflect badly on me to talk about this. Eventually it came out because it became worse. Her addiction became much more intense and destructive. Eventually we can't hide that stuff forever. So that surfaced and resurfaced on and off throughout my childhood. Yeah, that was hard. I loved school because it was just this wonderful escape from all of the things that were going on at home. It wasn't like it was always bad at home. It was just cyclical and so unpredictable in the way that only addiction can be. School was a safe haven. I did well in school except in math. Math was always a challenge for me, but reading and writing were just like breathing. I just loved it and was encouraging and I felt nurtured in school, loved it, loved going to the school library, loved going to the lake. The public library always had more books stacked to the shelves. It was no secret that I would become an English teacher. School was really important to me.

JL: Do you have any teachers that stood out to you at all?

RB: I do. My first and second grade teacher, she looped. She was very experimental. At the University of Minnesota, a whole scholarship and also a wing devoted to Margaret Verum, who was considered an absolutely revolutionary teacher of the 1960s and one of the longest serving teachers in the Minneapolis public schools. She was amazing. She was energetic, she was imaginative. She loved what she never married. Her life was her students. I just loved everything about being her student and looked forward to going there every day. I loved just seeing what she had in store.

JL: When you had her, what grade were you in?

RB: First and second grade. I had another great teacher. We did it looping again, this time with Sandy Anderson. I had her for fourth and fifth grade, and she was another one that I just dearly loved. She was kind of young and sort of a hippie. She had all these cool wigs and sometimes she wore her hair long and played guitar. She was really cool. She was a quintessential 1970s teacher. I loved my teachers at Minnehaha Elementary School.

JL: That's great. For our final topic, I'm going to ask you to reflect on local and global issues such as war, poverty, discrimination, social unrest, etc. In your opinion, what were some of the biggest local or global issues affecting the people in your neighborhood when you were growing up?

RB: Um, well, for my own particular parents, they were very anti-war. I think it's important to say that there's kind of a generation gap between my parents and a lot of the parents of my schoolmates and playmates when I was a young child. I don't remember my friend's parents being particularly politically active. I know that a lot of my friend's parents were Korean War vets era and my parents were Vietnam era. My dad missed going to Vietnam by like a month and got out a voluntary service just before his whole unit went. He kind of struggled with his ideas about the war. My mom was very antiwar, but she had conservative parents. So, I grew up going to family gatherings, and I can't speak about the neighborhood because I don't remember really talking about it with other people. In my extended family, they were all very pro Vietnam War and my parents were very much against it. I grew up for the first ten years of my life thinking that's what people talked about. My parents talked a lot about contemporary issues. They talked about the civil rights movement. I will say that I remember having a very pointed argument with my friend, my closest friend in the neighborhood when we were doing the "eeny meeny miny moe" to choose turns for something that we were doing. She used a racial slur, which I had never heard her use in that context. I told her if she used that word, I could not be her friend. She was upset with me and went home and told her dad. Her dad said that I was an N-word lover. I came back, I told my mom and we were they were kind of fighting this war by proxy. I told my mother and my mother said, you tell her that you can love anyone that you want to be loving. I told her that and I don't know, I don't know where it finally ended. I think, that there were people in the neighborhood who definitely had racial prejudices. I think that I was shocked to know later on when I was looking, I was doing the mapping of racial covenants in the houses and the neighborhood. While it wasn't in the block that I lived or in the surrounding blocks, it certainly was on the periphery. I did not understand thinking about this as an adult, why I had gone to elementary school and I cannot think of one child of color in my class from 1970 to 1978. I have no recollection nor seeing anyone of color in the neighborhood from 1970-1978. It was so incredibly segregated. I just did not think I had an understanding, obviously, where that came from until fairly recently. I didn't understand the historical reasons for that in terms of that particular neighborhood. My parents were very social justice minded, and I don't think that that was something that I really had necessarily shared among neighbors who were a little bit older and a little bit more blue-collar. I can't say that everybody shared the same mindset as the father of my friend. I will say that it just was not something that that came up where it was something that was continually talked about at the table with us as a family. I wish I could say that I had an awareness as a kid, as a teenager. I can't say that it was that much different and I lost touch with a lot of people in the neighborhood. My friends all went to Roosevelt. I think once I started going to a different school and most of the friends that I had at Minnehaha went to other neighborhoods. I was not very diverse in terms of racially, it was primarily Swedish in origin, the background of the Swedish Covenant Church, that Norwegian would have been a big that would have been considered diversity. Lutheranism would have been considered diversity. So, we're talking very, very white. I always was akin to my mother in terms of our feelings about, the feminist movement and about civil rights and about being a Democrat and about being a progressive and those kind of things. I held fast to those things even in high school.

JL: Thank you. Well, this is the end of our interview, and your responses are invaluable. I really appreciate the time you took the time to do this today. So, thank you so much for participating.

RB: Thank you.