Participants' Profile

Finding the right job or any job can be an arduous process and, for more and more young adults, college graduation does not automatically lead to full-time employment in high-skilled positions (Feldman & Turnley, 1995). This study sought to expand knowledge about what happens in the amorphous period after graduation. Participants responded to one overarching question about how recent college graduates navigate the current labor market as they exit school to enter work. The question took into consideration the potential impact of young adults' failure to assess circumstances before graduation, which may influence the next segment of their social and economic life. In a phenomenological approach, interviews with nine participants explored how recent college graduates navigated from school to work in a depressed economic climate. Each participant met the following criteria: a) recent graduate aged 18-29, b) unemployed or underemployed, and c) transitioned out of the college environment and actively in the labor market for meaningful work for at least six months. The following is a profile of each participant at the time of the interview:

George William, 24, graduated in 2012 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and International Affairs. He was unemployed and launching a technology start-up business. His affluent family was very involved in his post-graduation activity. As a result, he was able to relocate and intern for several companies after graduation (white, male).

Ryan Dodd, 27, majored in political science and graduated in 2012. He was underemployed and worked at Midwest University as a receptionist/administrator. He lived with a partner in a town nearby the university. He reported his partner as a source of strength to overcome the disappointments and shock encountered after graduation (white, male).

June Baker, 23, graduated in 2012 with a Bachelor's of Arts Degree in Spanish and a minor in International Studies. She traveled abroad, which led her to an internship there post-graduation. Upon her return to the United States, she worked in retail. After an extensive search, she found a good job at Midwest University in a Learning Community (black, female).

Peter Smith, 29, majored in psychology and graduated in 2010. He was underemployed and worked in sales. He could not locate internships and experienced a relationship breakup. He could not obtain his dream job and was in between sales positions (black, male).

Ron Golding, 28, earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology in May 2009. He was underemployed. He moved back home, as he reestablished himself post-graduation. During that time, he worked in customer service and sales. He spent three years in the labor market, and at the time of the interview, he worked at Midwest University as a receptionist (black, male).

Sally Adams, 23, graduated in 2012 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Women's Studies. She was underemployed. She moved back home for support. To some degree, her networking was successful. She obtained work as a substitute teacher. She would eventually leave the state in search for better opportunities elsewhere (black, female).

Tony Daniels, 24, graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science degree in African American Studies and Sociology. He was underemployed. .After graduation he completed an internship. When that experience ended, he worked as a private home health provider. He left that line of work and found work in another city at an organization that provides mentoring for high school students (black, male).

Susan Rosen, 26, graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Communication and Environmental Science. She was employed. She was an out-of-state student who decided to stay near the university after graduation. She worked at a variety of temporary job placements before securing work closely related to her environmental science degree (white, female).

Tracy Little, 26, graduated in 2012 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in International Studies, Global Environment, and Health. She was employed. She located internships abroad but, to her surprise, they were unpaid. Upon her return to the United States, she worked for a local start-up company (white, female).