Sally

35:27

Interviewer: OK, so Sally, everything is going to be confidential and recoded. But can you tell me about when you graduated from the university and what degree or degrees did you acquire?

Sally: I graduated in 2012, May, no sorry, not May, it's May now, I graduated April 27, 2012 with a degree in Women's Studies.

Interviewer: OK, well awesome, and so we're trying to figure out how to unpack this school-to-work transition bubble. And it sounds like, you know, most people come, they have a great undergraduate experience, they graduate. And, such as yourself, you completed a degree in Women's Studies. So you were right on schedule. And so you've met these rites of passage successfully. So given that context, how do you feel about your transition from school to work, now that you've acquired one of our degrees?

Sally: I would have to say it wasn't like the easiest transition, just because…Like it wasn't horrible, but it wasn't like the easiest transition at all, because [unclear]. The work force field is kind of hard to get into right now. There's not that many job opportunities out here. So kind of got to get in where you fit in a little bit.

Interviewer: And so with that said, you're smart enough to recognize the economy plays a part, you've gotten this degree, when you had your own expectations set for yourself,

were there things that you thought would happen for you once that you graduated from college?

Sally: Yeah, I thought it was going to be a lot easier to get a job. And it wasn't as easy as I thought. And then on top of that, I thought I would get a job, oh I intended on going into social work, but then I was like, oh I actually don't want to do that anymore. But even so, it was just really hard to find a job anywhere. Cause people like they really look for experience. And it was like, well yeah I have a college degree, but I don't really have a lot of experience working.

Interviewer: So now you start to discover this and you make sense, what are some things that didn't happen for you based on expectations whether it's personally or professionally, things that didn't happen even though you have this degree?

Sally: I mean, uh, for whatever reason, I guess it's just being naïve and being in college, because you assume like oh as soon as you get out, you're going to get a job making about what 30, 40 thousand dollars. Not so, not really. It really didn't really happen like that. And I mean it's not anything disappointing, you just do realize like you have to work your way up. You still, even though you graduated from college, you still got to work your way up. It's not, it doesn't come that easy.

Interviewer: Yeah, and let's unpack that. Are there particular challenges you found, like once you discovered, like wow, I've got to work up to this? What would you say are some challenges around that?

Sally: Challenges, like what exactly do you really want to do? Cause like, granted I got an undergraduate degree in Women's Studies, I can still pretty much do whatever

I want to do. It's still an open playing field. I think a big challenge is like we have this, pretty much you still have the world in your hands. It's kind of like what exactly do you want to do with it? So really sitting down and really thinking like OK what is my purpose, like why I am I here? What purpose do I serve on earth? What can I do to serve others? How can I actually put this degree to work? That was kind of challenging. You're not, like I just feel like college is really like great big, it's just a big, huge learning experience. You get to dibble and dabble in a lot of different things. You get to meet a lot of different people, see a lot of things you've never seen before. So it broadens your horizons, but now it's like, OK, now you kind of have to come back in and OK what do I do?

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely, So while you….[Cross talk] No, go ahead, you tell the story.

Sally: It is definitely, it's a lot harder than you think. It's definitely a lot harder than it looks.

Interviewer: So tell me this, so you discover these challenges. Now in term of this transition, what do you do for social support? Like how do you get through this transition? And what was helpful in terms of support?

Sally: I would say like definitely college professors, you always hear like oh you definitely need to make those connections in college. Those were probably really beneficial to me. Cause like I go back and it's like, "Well, yes it is definitely hard, but you can do it. Like you're really smart, blah, blah, blah." They write you recommendations for like jobs you want to get into or

like….Cause right now I'm applying to the master's program, so they help out with that. And they keep

pushing you forward. So definitely a good college support system. Then you kind of go and see your family and friends. Faith definitely helped me out. And also just really finding yourself. I mean I know for me, I did it through church, but really kind of digging deep inside yourself and just really figuring out who you are, who you are spiritually. So it's a mixture of things but I would say top big things would be family and friend support, college professor support, as well as like spiritual, Jesus, religion.

Interviewer: Very good, very good. Yeah, because as you cope, that's good to know. You've identified that. Now shifting gears a little bit, and you alluded to it a little bit, but let's unpack it. The undergraduate years provide an opportunity to explore learning inside and out of the classroom. So we'll go with part one of the question, to what degree your academics prepared you to find gainful

employment? So you're in the Women's Studies Department and you also have a General Education experience with us before you concentrate, how did those preparations prepare you for gainful employment?

Sally: Uh,

Interviewer: And you're OK saying it didn't.

Sally: Uh, I definitely like hmm, let me think about it before I answer.

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely take your time.

Sally: Hmm [pause] I think maybe it just made me more of a critical thinker, I would say. To think like, “This isn’t working. Let me switch this up and do this a little

differently.” I would say like I would definitely, you see a lot of different ways of doing one thing. And you just kind of like play with a whole bunch of other different things and figure out the best way to do it. Does that make any sense?

Interviewer: Well, yeah absolutely. So you’re saying that your critical thinking in terms of the academic training help, and you apply that.

Sally: Yeah, so, for sure, because it’s kind of like, OK, for instance when I’m teaching my kids, I’m going OK, well, this isn’t working. OK, well let me see something else I’ve seen, like a different way that a professor taught it. So like just a different teaching style. Maybe as in a [unclear] than this whole Western type of teaching. So just like definitely like being more of a critical thinker. I know for me with Women’s Studies, it definitely made me think about things where…cause I always say like, “Hey this would have been really kind of beneficial in high school. I wonder why I never learned anything like this in high school.” So for me, that’s one of things was for me, like I learned so much out of Women’s Studies, just out of life, great things now, go deeper than the surface.

Interviewer: Yeah, and that’s awesome. So using that language to break things down and go beneath the surface. So in terms of using that, do you see any correlation with securing gainful employment even though it offers you a great body of

knowledge?

Sally: Do I see a connection….what was the question, I'm sorry? Sally 5 March 17, 2014

Interviewer: In finding gainful employment. I mean it's a great body of knowledge, I do agree. It does allow you to see things in a different perspective, but to what degree does it contribute in finding the gainful employment?

Sally: Gainful employment?

Interviewer: Yeah, gainful employment, for us that means like you know a job that provides you with the benefits and that you go to day to day. It kind of lines up with your own career aspirations.

Sally: Hmm, uh, not really sure like how to answer that question. Just coming from my perspective, just cause maybe I'm just not, I'm still like in an entry level type of like job. So maybe I feel like you might have to ask someone who's more like into their careers. Only because I don't feel like I get a chance to really use a lot of like gainful did you say gainful knowledge?

Interviewer: Well, so knowledge, again you majored in Women's Studies so for us the academic is a body of knowledge from that discipline. So to what degree are you able to use that body of knowledge in the job that you do or even in your own job search?

Sally: Well, maybe as far as like, maybe more so like social justice. We learned a lot about that

in Women's Studies. And I do know that I work with kids and I'm pretty heavily influential with them. It's kind of like when they do things that I don't think necessarily are fair to one another, I get a chance to like really address it, which I kind of like. But other than that, like I don't know, it's kind of blurred lines for now. I may see it, be able to uh, cause I actually want to go into

hospitality, so maybe I could use it more when I do that. And it will be more like applicable. Cause like right now it's not hmm, yeah I don't see like me being a Women's Studies major kind of like got me the position that I'm in. And I feel like maybe if I had gone into Social Work, it would be a different story, but I didn't.

Interviewer: So now how about this then? Was the faculty helpful in helping Women Studies majors look for jobs or find jobs?

Sally: Uh, hmm, they were pretty helpful. They were pretty helpful. I mean, like I said, when I was there, I was pretty geared to going towards Social Work, so they kind of steered me in the direction of Social Work, which was cool. But then once I figured out, "Hey, this is kind of like not what I want to do," it was kind of like, I, it's not that I stopped talking to them, but I definitely started talking to more people who could help me with the whole hospitality thing.

Interviewer: Oh, OK.

Sally: If that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah it does, cause to me what it says is you kind of changed your mind in the game at some point in terms of career choices.

Sally: Yeah.

Interviewer: Now about this one? You know, the social college experience is pretty huge. Did the social college experience prepare you to find gainful employment?

Sally: The social aspects?

Interviewer: Yeah, uh huh.

Sally: Uh, I would think so.

Interviewer: OK, yeah feel free to tell us how and in what ways did socially that help you find work? Your social networks.

Sally: Yeah, probably because for one, just interacting with people and different people. Because I went to a predominantly black high school so I've just been predominantly around black people. But going to Midwest University, you meet a diversity of people. And I feel like that kind of helped me settle in when it comes to like the work field. So socially it's like, I feel like I can get around people who support me. And that's a great feeling. And I recognize that, and I can really try to do the same in return to my fellow colleagues. Also I just like planning programs, making bulletin boards, like you get your creative juices flowing. I consider myself a pretty creative person so kind of gets your creative juices flowing by being socially active on campus.

Interviewer: And this question was actually when you look at both of them, looking at networks, so basically in your networks, did you find that the job that you have now is it a result of looking for work through your networks or how did you end

up with the work that you have now?

Sally: It was a network kind of thing but it wasn't from Midwest University. It was more so from like my mom. Cause my mom, she's a retired principal and so she got me a job like teaching. So that was, yeah so that's how that worked out. But it's temporary, but I think, I do think that like once I kind of branch out more

and do something I would like to do, like with the hospitality, I think the network would be great. I'm considering moving, and I know Midwest University is pretty heavily like populating in like D.C. and Atlanta, California areas. So I feel like the networking would be, it could help out. It just didn't help me out in this situation, but I can't say it will never help me out.

Interviewer: It's just at this time, it wasn't, it didn't help. But you realize if you do relocate, these are things that you could do.

Sally: Yeah and even if I was like more so in the Ann Arbor area—I'm just in Detroit right now. But if I was in Ann Arbor, I'm sure I could get a job up there pretty easily because of the network.

Interviewer: OK. Good, good. Now shifting a little bit, so the transition, we're basically looking at transition, which is basically a period between two periods or turning points. So when you look at the economy, do you think to some degree this has impacted your school-to-work transition at all?

Sally: Umm, I think so and like the value of education right now. Only because with the economy like there's not that many jobs so it's like we're all kind of looking for the same jobs on

top of it's kind of hard. They'll be like, "Oh because she has a degree from here, she can do the work." But it's kind of like you have somebody else who has more experience so like the person with more experience will get the job over the person with the degree these days. Cause it's kind of like, "I mean it's great that you have this degree, but what can you physically do? I don't need you to write a paper. I need you to do A plus B and C and E. And I need it done right

the first time." It's kind of like you're going to go for someone who has experience over someone with the education, in my opinion.

Interviewer: [Phone rings] Hang on a second, Sally, hang on. Sorry about that. Yeah sorry I must have missed their call. OK, honey. Yeah, and you're right about that. So when you think about that, when you hear that kind of statement, what kind of thoughts in your own training from undergrad to the present, how do you make sense of that?

Sally: I guess I can't say it's like, oh, was my education like worthless? Cause it wasn't, it wasn't at all. I feel like it was needed for me to grow, for me to develop and become, like I said, like a critical thinker. I don't think that would have happened without going to Midwest Universitya. And with the [unclear], you know what it, it kind of goes back to the whole connection thing. Say if I were to not like make better connections but say if I was to utilize like [unclear] connections more, I'm sure I could talk my way up. But it's just like for now it is kind of hard when you're just kind of going….Cause I'm sure at one point in time you could just go in on sight and it wouldn't even have to be, "Oh it's because I know somebody at Midwest University that I'm doing this." It would be just because you had this college degree, and it's great that you have a college degree. But I think that knowing people would definitely help

but….I don't know, I feel like I'm talking in circles, but it's because I'm driving. I'm sorry.

Sally 10 March 17, 2014

Interviewer: Yeah, I know. Well, how about this one? The other piece is does the timing into today's economic climate, does that impact your short- or long-term career aspirations? Let's try that one.

Sally: Uh, no, not for me, just because I know for sure now, there is a transitioning period, I think like in your transition period, for me I feel like I've grown the most, and I fully….Cause at first I was kind of like, oh I don't know if I want to do hospitality. I want to go for the sure thing. So that was like at that point, that was like Social Work or was teaching. But it was like now I know for sure I'd rather just take my chance. And the money is not going to really matter to me. Like I know I'm going to, I'm going to be fine. I might not be rich, but I'll be fine. I may be rich, I'll never know. But it's not about the money. And I think that right now, well not working so much in Detroit, but like I told you I plan on hopefully moving and have a better like event planning, like in management type of thing. That is what I would look into, event management and hospitality.

Interviewer: Oh, OK.

Sally: And like the economy's not the best right now, but in some areas, there's always going to be an event. Like Miami, Orlando, and like D.C. there's always going to be an event there. Like the economy might, you know, [unclear] but there's always going to be events that need to be planned. And they need planners.

Interviewer: And that's a very smart conclusion. To what degree you think, what was the catalyst for switching into this new direction, which sounds promising?

Sally 11 March 17, 2014

Sally: For me it was, it was something I always like to do when I was on campus. I was involved with like organizations, [unclear] and I was always the planner of these type of organizations, like on the organization I was like the planner, the event planner. And so I guess that's where like kind of the love came from. I put so much into it like I was very passionate about these events, a little bit more passionate than I was about my classes. But that's where it kind of came from. It was like well people used to tell me like, "Why don't you focus on this for a living?" It's like, "Well no, my parents wouldn't necessarily approve and I want to go for the sure thing." Like I wanted the sure thing. And the more you think, like when you start working, you'll see like, this actually is a lot like just working, it just drains you. And it's like, I for sure I want to do something I want to do. And like I love to plan those events. Like I spent hours doing it, endless hours. And I didn't feel like it was work. So that's how, OK, this is for sure something I would like to get into. And so I don't know, you really [unclear] now. Whereas like before it was like, "Well, I just want to make my money." No you actually want to like enjoy what you're doing, because it's not worth it. The money's not worth it.

Interviewer: And that's a good point. And what's interesting, what do you think to yourself when you make that point near the end of your college career, but you culminate the college degree anyway? What do you think to yourself?

Sally: Uh, I mean, I think short term, you should think it's over, because like "Oh, I'm finished

with college. It's done. I'm kind of stuck in this career." But you're really not. And I think you just think that, for whatever reason you just think that in undergrad, like "Hey, this is over, this is it." But it's like you have [unclear] after

undergrad. And you can do pretty much still whatever you want. Just because you have a degree in Women's Studies or a degree in like Education doesn't really mean anything. It means like you know about that field and that's great. But you still don't really know anything. Does that make sense?

Interviewer: Yeah, I mean I hear your point, but I guess what I was trying to get you to unpack is near the end of your senior year, you major in Women's Studies, but you realize you want to move into another direction. I think initially it was Social Work and now you're really interested in event planning.

Sally: And hospitality.

Interviewer: And hospitality. So when you look back, you think back to yourself, what do you wish you could do differently? Or do you think everything went according as planned? How do you make sense of acquiring this new knowledge about yourself?

Sally: I think everything went as according as planned. Like I say, I definitely [unclear] so I don't believe in the whole like doing things over again. Like I just don't. I think things went exactly how it was supposed to go. Like the doors that opened for me opened for me and the doors that didn't they weren't meant to open. So yeah.

Interviewer: Awesome, because I can see that's a little bit of your spiritual framework that allows

you to be very forgiving and, you know, keep it moving forward. That's really good. Is there anything specifically you think us as administrators can do to help that transition from school to work?

Sally 13 March 17, 2014

Sally: Uh, maybe like, maybe this is offered and I just never knew about it, but maybe like a class about like life after college or something, I don't know. Like I know for Women's Studies, we had like people come in and so we had like a capstone(?). I know some people do have capstones(?), but maybe offer more capstones(?) on different subjects on like what it is to graduate and like move on into the work field. And maybe like I don't know, because I know for some people it is pretty easy, no I don't think it's easy for anybody. Everybody's been having a little trouble. So I can't even say it's easy for everyone, some people, I don't think it's easy for anyone.

Interviewer: That's a good idea, I mean, I don't know. Yeah, that's why I say, for me I ask that question, because I'm hoping to put together a collective of recommendations from the thoughts of the people I interview. And you're right, why don't we offer a course, even if it's a mini course for life after college? You're absolutely right.

Sally: Yeah, because like it was….And it's funny cause me and my friends we always talk about it, and it was like, yeah, they didn't actually tell us it was going to be so….it's rough. It's not a little walk in the park. I always kind of preach to my friends who are still in college who are [unclear], "Don't rush it, because you better enjoy like where you're at now, because you're trying to rush your days and it's not, it's not anything to look….." Not to say it's not anything to look forward to, of course

tomorrow's always something to look forward to, but at the same time, like if you're not enjoying today, you're for sure not going to enjoy the next day. What's going to stop you from enjoying the next day? It's always going to be an issue.

Sally 14 March 17, 2014

Interviewer: Do you think you had that urgency to get done? Cause sometimes students feel like that. What was your take?

Sally: I wasn't necessarily in a rush to get done. Because by the time I got done, it was like, "Uh oh, what am I going to do?" But I did, I was kind of like, it was draining toward the end. Cause it's like you have to do the same thing, seeing the same people for the last four years. Like it's not, I guess by senior year, it's kind of like, it's dead. And there's so much to do senior year. That's draining in itself. But I wasn't going to be in a rush, not like other people.

Interviewer: Now final comment, when you say things are draining during that senior year, do you think to some degree that impacts students' availability to kind of look for gainful employment in that last term?

Sally: For sure. Because you have all these classes that you need to finish. And then honestly, like looking for a job and looking for what you're going to do next year, that's probably a class in itself.

Interviewer: Yeah, you're right about that. Honestly, I don't think we think about that.

Sally: Yeah, and it was hard. Cause you've got all these papers due, but then you've got all these deadlines due for these programs you're trying to get into and then…. Yeah, it's just, I don't know, it's crazy.

Interviewer: Yeah, now did you do any internships while you were here?

Sally: While I was there? Not that I can think of. No, I worked. I worked every summer. I didn't do any internships there I don't think, not that I can honestly remember.

Sally 15 March 17, 2014
Interviewer: Now what kind of work did you have over the summers?

Sally: Summer, I did like a teaching job again. So I guess that kind of helped me out to get this one a little bit cause I put it on my resume. I'm thinking…..What else did I do? I did Wolverine Summer Camp so I did some like summer camp stuff. I worked in the Union for a minute in an office in the Union. I did some other things too but I just can't remember. I traveled. I did Study Abroad thing.

Interviewer: OK, where did you go out of curiosity?

Sally: I went to South African with Nishas[?]

Interviewer: Oh fun, fun. And this keeps coming back to me in your own dialogue, because again I'm familiar with the different career development theories. And it's funny because to me—and it might be just a timing thing—you have this propensity and you have a level of skills that came easy for you to do, like event planning and programming and also hospitality, so at what point do you decide like, hey, this is what I really want to do?

Sally: Uh, probably when I, cause I'll plan some things for like friends. Like right now I'm planning my friend's graduation party. But I feel like at [unclear], I get so excited to plan it, that's how I kind of know that this is something that I really want to

do. And like maybe because, like when you're in college, you're kind of just like that's what you do, because it's just like it's college. Are you asking like when do you say, Oh I can turn this into a career?

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely, that's exactly what I'm saying.

Sally 16 March 17, 2014

Sally: I don't know, I just had to like do this thing like what's going to really make me happy. It was like, planning events is going to make me happy. And it's like I don't really care if it's a birthday party or if it's a Bar Mitzvah or if it's like the Grammys or if it's like the auto show. I just want to plan something, like I want to sit down and I want to make a schedule and I want to make a budget. I want to talk to people. I want to interact with people. I want to like work toward a common goal. That's just something I like to do. And that's why I kind of want to make a career out of it. And then taking notes are kind of difficult, especially when you do things on your own now. Cause like when you were in college, you had a syllabus, like you kind of like you are free to make your own plans, but it still is pretty [unclear]. It's still like, OK, you have your syllabus, you study for test. You make your notecards. You study for this long. You take the test this day. You write the paper this day. You get the grade this day. Move to the next thing. It's very structured, but when you're done, you're pretty much not completely free to move but pretty free to move and you make your own decisions. You have a lot of control, a lot more control. And probably getting used to that is the hardest thing, to that control.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's almost like you got to manage all that what appears like free time or

something.

Sally: It is like, it's like, it's funny to me because I'll listen to my friends talk about like how little time they have. And it's like, "Oh you really are going to have little or no time when you graduate." Because I mean my day it's a go. I feel like, I'm probably too young to feel like this but like right now at 23, I feel like my life is

on fast forward. I don't remember feeling like this in undergrad. I don't feel like the days went by slowly, but I felt like they kind of just went by. But right now, oh, it's like, I graduated two years ago almost, and it doesn't seem like it was two years ago.

Interviewer: Wow, isn't that something? And it's almost like until you really think about it, you're right. It doesn't feel like two years, but when you sit down you're like, "Whoa, it's been two years."

Sally: Uh huh, because like after undergraduate, I feel like undergraduate for sure it just goes.

Interviewer: Hello, are you still there?

Sally: Yeah I'm still here.

Interviewer: Well, I tell you what Sally, I definitely look forward to hearing the next steps when you move into your hospitality management curriculum.

Sally: Thank you. I hope I get in. Let's just pray.

Interviewer: Well, did you already apply to a program?

Sally: Well, I'm applying now. I'm finishing up applications between like going to two jobs. So yeah.

Interviewer: Now interestingly did you know that Eastern has a great Hospitality Management Program?

Sally: I didn't, oh, OK.

Sally 18 March 17, 2014

Interviewer: Yeah, you may want to take a look and see if they have what's line with your own goals. Yeah cause they sure do, and I don't know when the deadline is, but you might want to put them on your list.

Sally: OK, they have a Master's?

Interviewer: Yeah, uh huh, and then given that you're already familiar with the Ann Arbor/Ypsi area. So who knows? It might be one for you just to look at the curriculum and see if that's worth your while.

Sally: I'll do that for sure.

Interviewer: All right my friend, well thank you…[Recording ends]

Sally 19 March 17, 2014