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Stacy

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11/03/2012

St's Interview

St Catherine University

St

11/03/2012

L - St, where were you born?

S - Buffalo, MN.

L - Is that where you grew up?

S - I grew up, I moved around a lot. I grew up in St. Louis Park, MN, sometimes, and then sometimes Rockford, and I spent a chunk of my life in Minneapolis.

L - So you've lived in the Twin Cities area and surrounding area?

S - Mmhmm, yeah.

L - How old are you?

S - I'm 19.

L - What was your living situation growing up? Who lived in your family?

S - My parents divorced when I was 6 or 7, I think. I was 6 and my dad went with my brother and I went with my mom. Sometimes they got back together, but most of the time I went with

my mom. I stayed with my mom in Minneapolis and my dad stayed with my brother in St. Louis Park for the most part.

L – Right, some of it is that the family split apart [and] so you sort of went with [your mom]?...
Most of your childhood did you grow up in Minneapolis?

S - It's complicated. I grew up in Minneapolis from 3rd grade to 6th, and I moved with my dad to St. Louis Park 7th and 8th, but I came back to Minneapolis in my 8th, then I moved back to St. Louis Park.

L - For high school?

S - Yeah.

L - I think a lot of families that are split [up] that happens. Who did you grow up with? You had a brother and you lived all together until you were about 6. Then it was basically you and your mom. Any other people or sisters, brothers, cousins?

S - I stayed with my older brother in the 9th grade, just for my first year most of my first year of high school, I stayed with my older brother. He's ten years older than me, I was 15 and he was about 25 and I stayed with my sister a little bit, when I was 12.

L - And she's older too?

S - She's a lot older than me and I think she's in her 30s so I just stayed with her for a few months.

L - Would you say that there was some housing insecurity as you were growing up?

S - Yeah, because I didn't really want to live with my mom. I wanted to live with my dad, but my step mom didn't want me to live with my dad, but I was always trying to go back to my dad. So sometimes I could and sometimes I couldn't.

L - And that's partly why there was the movement back and forth. [So] When you first experienced housing insecurity in some ways there was some of that as you were growing up and I guess what..... It's this last summer that you were really thinking about that you wanted to [discuss].... What happened?

S - Things were fine for the first half of the summer, I was living with my dad and little brother in St. Louis Park and my mom was living in Golden Valley with her boyfriend. I just graduated high school so I was happy. And then my dad found a mobile home in Rockford and he wanted to move there because he was struggling with paying. He worked at _____ apartments so he worked as a caretaker for the apartment we lived in in St. Louis Park, and he kinda wanted to get away from that and get a house finally, because I don't think he's ever had one. He found a cheap mobile home in Rockford and so I was planning on moving with him but [as] he's moving back - his wife Olga is moving with him, and my step brother and sister, [and her] oldest daughter so we were all going to move together to Rockford. But then, a couple days before they

were finally moving in, he told me that she said I can't move with them. So that's when I got confused and I wasn't sure where I was going to go.

L - When you think about it, so in terms of what led up to it, it was this change of situation for your dad and step mother that could have brought on the housing insecurity for you. So what happened? What did you do when you're told you're not going to Rockford?

S - He told me like two days before. He actually moved away. He had to move out of the apartment in St. Louis Park and I was upset because he didn't give me enough time to find my own place. He kept telling me he was going to ask Olga, my step mom, if I could stay. He was like. She'll say "yes," but she didn't, so I was upset with him for not asking sooner not giving me a big heads up. Since it was two days before I moved out, I started being really rebellious I was just really upset and angry all the time. I started hanging out with the wrong crowd and doing things I shouldn't be doing.

L - Part of it, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it seems like you got the rug pulled out from under you.

S - It was all happening really fast.

L - And knowing [that] you needed to figure things out, but that you weren't really given much of a chance to set things up for yourself. So, [when] he moves to Rockford, where do you go? What do you do?

S - The first night I stayed with a few of my brother[‘s] friends. They were twins. Two guys and they stayed – they were a little bit younger than me, and they stayed in the building I lived in at the time, so that’s how I knew them. Me and a friend just stayed over there for the night because their mom was gone, so I just stayed there.

L - How long did that work out for?

S - That was just for the night.

L - Just for the first night. Then what did you do?

S - After that, I stayed at some other people I met through friends, so another guy’s house, and then I stayed at a neighbor’s house for a night, so just stayed at friends’.

L - Right – kind of couch surfing. How long did that period last?

S - For about a week. It was a long week though.

L - I bet because you didn’t know what was going to happen next.

S - I thought it was going to last for the rest of the summer, but it didn’t.

L - What happened after that week?

S - I went on a missions trip with my church.

L – Oh, it was that quick – I, of course I read your story and I wasn't quite sure how much time there was in there.

S - I planned on going on the mission trip for a month and I was having second thoughts about going on it because I was starting to lose faith in God and stuff, but I thought I might as well go because it was a five-day mission trip so it would give me [a] home for five days. So I thought I would go and just worry about where I would stay when I got back. So I went but my faith started growing in God again and when I came back, my dad was talking to my older cousin and she said I could stay with her in her house in Rockford. So that's where I ended up staying for the rest of the summer.

L - But this gave you a time to get your head together and from what I recall what you wrote, to kind of reconnect with yourself almost. It sounds like when you were trying to find a place to sleep and didn't know what was going on that you were just kind of angry and looking for some escape would you say?

S - Yeah.

L - Did you have a job last summer?

S - I had two jobs in the first half of the summer. I've been working both of them for a while. I worked at a movie theater as a concession attendant and I also worked as a housekeeper in a nursing home. ____ Then when my dad said we were moving, I quit my movie theater job because we would be moving. He was still driving to work to St. Louis Park everyday, so I could still work in my nursing home job, so that's how I kept that job for a while.

L - So you had some income of your own; that can help. Ultimately it was your cousin that helped provide a place for you to stay for the rest of the summer.

S - I stayed with her for the rest of the summer except 5 days before school because she had two foreign exchange students moving in with her for the school year. My dad said that he told her that I would have a place to stay for the last week of summer but he didn't, again. So I stayed with my ex-boyfriend at Augsburg College the first week before school started.

L - How did that work?

S - Not so well because he was my ex, and I didn't want to stay with him, but...

L - You felt like that was someone you could go to. Then you were able to move in here. In terms of accessing resources and things that were helpful it sounds like the mission trip was an immediate way helpful and a lot of it was relying on friends and family and just different people who could... Any other sort of resources?

S - A lot of people on the mission trip because there was an older lady from the church that took us on the trip and she just told me a lot about the mistakes she made when she was younger. I felt I could relate to it and if she changed, I thought I could change too, like the mistakes I was making during the time. It was a good inspiration for me.

L - To be able to talk to someone who would really understand and I think especially when we're feeling kind of lost or confused and unsure about things, that makes a big difference. Who did you feel like you could rely on in this time?

S - I thought my friends. I thought my friends were everything at the time because they were all I had, but looking back now, they weren't even that good of friends. They were someone to hang out with.

L - Were these other kids who were also in an insecure housing situation? Or just that there was room for you to hang out with them?

S - One of them was having trouble with her mom so she just tagged along, but she tagged along with me sometimes, but she could have went home. She was just mad at her mom so she decided to follow wherever I went for a couple days.

L - Was it nice to have someone with you?

S – Well, it made it hard for me to find a place to stay sometimes because then I had to ask for two people. So I kind of wanted her to go back to her house because it was just making it a little more difficult for me after a while.

L - It's enough to try and just find one couch, I can see that. Can you tell me what your priorities were and what did you think about when you woke up or during the day, what were you trying to take care of.

S - I woke up for work as a housekeeper so I woke up early for work. I worked for the first half of the day and I guess I just stopped caring about everything. All I thought about was just hanging out with my friends and partying every night.

L - When you took the mission trip it just gave you a chance to turn things around. Did you have enough food at the time?

S - Not always. I was hungry a lot. My dad, he just dropped off some money sometimes for me and then he would go back to Rockford. I was spending the money on weed and stuff at the time which was stupid 'cause that was food money too. A lot of people do that which is a problem.

L - I think with the priority of hanging out and partying with friends that that makes sense. Your dad would drop off money at your work? Or he would find where you were staying?

S – Yeah, I was staying with...all my friends were just right around the apartments that we used to live at so he would just drop it off there or I would just walk to his work and meet him there or something.

L - So you kept in touch. How did it feel, like in a way, he was trying to take care of you?

S – Yeah, I guess he just wanted to make sure I had money but I just don't think he handled it right. He could have handled it differently. He should have told my step mom if I could come with, that she can go until the rest of the summer because he was already living without her. He could have just waited until at least I finished the summer until I started school.

L - Right. That's not right. Can you tell me how you think gender might have shaped your experience? That, being a woman, did that have any impact on what it was like for you?

S - Well, for my whole life I think it's a big difference. Just 'cause I'm a girl and just 'cause my brother is a boy he always – he never had to struggle about going back and forth he always stayed with my dad. And I always had to go with my mom because I was a girl, so I always find my way over to go see my dad because my stepmom wouldn't let me. For the whole homeless part for the summer when I stayed at a guy's house, once he tried to touch on me and stuff and it was dangerous, I could have gotten raped, that probably wouldn't have happened if I was a boy. It still happens to guys but it makes me more vulnerable because I'm a girl.

L - And you're young and you are pretty and all those things. And part of it is there are people who are predators, they are looking for young women who don't have a place to stay and I think, you know, you're right gender doesn't totally shape that but it does sometimes change our options. Is there anything more about your period of housing insecurity that I should know?

S - Anything specific?

L - Just that you feel is important to understanding your story?

S - Not that I can think of.

L - So you were able to find more secure housing through the help of your cousin and through other peoples help. How did that work out? Was that a good situation?

S - With my cousin?

L - Mmmhmm

S - Yeah, I loved it. At first I was hesitant because I just wanted... I was upset because my dad was just living a few blocks away from me, 'cause I was in Rockford, and it was kind of hard seeing everybody, like my brother and everybody, go home and I had to go to a whole different house. I kind of felt shut out but I stayed with my cousin and her husband and I felt like they were like a family and [one] of the foreign exchange guys moved in and he was a good friend

and we talked, he was around my age, so it was nice to have somebody there. They became my family and it was a nice house and I always kept busy, so it was nice.

L – So, the rest of the summer kind of came together. Wow, sounds pretty intense. You're living in the dorms now. Do you know what you're going to do over the holidays?

S - Those are worries too. I'm not sure still.

L - Yeah, sorry. Now we're going to switch to your educational journey. This will be little easier maybe. What's your educational journey been like? How did you like school growing up and through high school?

S - I switched schools a lot because I moved back and forth. My parents moved a lot so I spent a lot of time thinking I hated moving around because I make really close friends and then I have to leave or they leave or something. I kind of just wished I stayed in one spot growing up. My first two years of high school, I went to four high schools already .

L - And partly high school kids can be pretty cliquey.

S – Yeah, a lot.

L - And to make your way in a new place that takes some work.

S - You have to go try to fit into a group that was already...

L - They knew each other. In terms of your academic work, did you like school?

S - When I lived with my brother, my freshman year of high school I didn't do so well. Probably because it was so hard living without my parents.

L - That was pretty young.

S - My second year of high school, I started getting it together. Even though things weren't always easy at home, I always tried to do the best I could at school, because I never thought about college, but I just thought I want to have good grades.

L - And you had the brains to do it.

S - If I worked hard.

L - Well it's inspiration and perspiration. How did you get to St. Kate's?

S - I originally wanted to go to Augsburg College but my ex went there. And we always planned on going there together and staying together but then things started falling apart between us.

L - Was that your senior year?

S - Yeah, I was with him 10th grade – 12th grade so we were together for a while but then we fell apart. And I toured St. Kate's and I really like the school and I like the people and the campus is beautiful; so I just chose here.

L - Do you know what you were planning on studying?

S - I'm going to study social work.

L - That's right. Luci is a social work student. So how do you like it so far here?

S - I love it. It makes everything that I ever went through worth it. I love it here, I've made some... I've only been for a little bit over two months but I made some really good friends so far and teachers are really helpful and friendly.

L - I think, as a school it's important that students need to be taken care of in that way. That you're an individual and you're not just one of a number, I'm glad you're seeing some of that. So when you think about your classmates at St. Kate's, do you think people are aware of issues of poverty or homelessness? Do you get that sense?

S - We study it a lot in my classes. In two of my classes, we're studying it right now. And in my speech class, sometimes it comes up as a topic for speech. So, I say yeah, they're aware of it but I think [that] people here [who] have probably gone through homelessness, like they don't talk about it. So I think if it was a bigger topic here...

L – So, there is awareness but maybe some of that awareness is more academic and that people in their just regular lives aren't necessarily thinking about it and seeing how it affects a lot of people. Do you have any particular instances or examples that you have of where you got that sense of people are aware or unaware.

S - I'm reading the Reflective Woman and another book we're reading by Jason D_____ but there are a lot of homeless stories in there, so that is kind of our way to learn.

L - And when you hear your classmates talk about it, what do you think?

S - Not everybody understands. Like some people are like, "How come they don't get a job?" – Like the homeless people – how come they're not working?

L - And what do you think when you hear that?

S - I just think that they don't understand. I was just telling my roommate today like I wish some people could just go through it. I'm not wishing anyone bad but they should just go through an experience before they right away start judging people.

L - Absolutely. That's a lot of what I hope this project can do is help people get a clue. Just because you may not have experienced something doesn't mean you know all about it. When it comes to your professors, and you've got readings that deal with these issues, do you think that your professors get it?

S - I think they would... one of my professors was a social work major before she came here so she learned a lot about these issues and my teaching just seemed caring. I think they would know about this stuff.

L - And just that they have an awareness that this is out there. If you could tell other students and professors what you'd want them know, that they may not get on their own, can you say what that would be?

S - Just don't be too quick to judge somebody that's homeless because you don't know what they're going through. You can't just right away think "Why don't they have a job?"

L - A lot of people are homeless and have jobs.

S - Imagine if you're working a minimum wage job and you're getting paid bi-weekly, but you don't have a car, and you have to pay for your apartment, and you have to pay for electricity and everything, you can't afford everything with a job that only pays \$7.25, like at McDonald's.

L - I think that, in a nutshell, is so often what the story is: that a lot of the jobs that are available don't pay enough to support somebody. So you can be working and still be really struggling. So you plan to graduate in three and a half years, can you tell me about some of your hopes, and plans and dreams for after graduation?

S - I'm still just deciding everything but I'm pretty sure now like social work.... Because I was going to be a communications major but I'm pretty sure social work is what I want to do. I would probably like to work with kids, like the kids who are in foster homes, maybe check on them or counsel kids, or possibly go to nonprofit places abroad and just help organizations that could really use help.

L - The thing is there are so many incredible opportunities out there and you don't have to do everything at once. You can get a chance to try different things out but I think your interest in really helping kids, given your background, that this would help you in that work.

S - Yeah, I mean – especially since a lot of things I went through when I was really little I can relate to a lot of kids probably and tell them I understand. And I'll tell them my story so they know I can relate. Give advice cause I've been through it.

L - Did you go into foster care as a kid?

S - No.

L - But just having some of that. So, if you were asking the questions, is there something that you would want to ask that I'm not thinking of asking?

S - I don't know, you covered a lot.

L - I just want to make sure that it tells what you want it to tell and it sounds like you are an amazing person.

S - Thank you.

L - I wish you all the best.