

Interview Project

Part 2

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Salt Lake Community College
Communications 1010-039
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Included are 3 documents: Updated Interview Outline, Analysis Memo, and Letter of Thanks

Document #1- Updated Interview Plan

Opening:

Hello, Shauna! Thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy schedule to sit down with me. I have taken advantages of services at UILC since my injury two years ago and I really value the work that you do here.

As I explained to you before, the purpose of this interview is for me to learn more about what you do for The Utah Independent Living Center, as well as in local politics. This is an assignment for my communications class, but it is also an important “sneak peak” for me into a career that I am very interested in.

I will be taking a few notes here and there throughout our conversation, but don’t let me distract you, I just want to be sure to remember as much as possible.

We should not take more than 30 minutes, thank you again for your time, are you ready to dive in?

Body:

Typical Routine

1. How would you describe your job at UILC? (primary, open)
 - a. What do you consider the most important part of your job? (secondary, closed)

2. Will you tell me about an “ordinary” day at UILC? (primary, open)
 - a. What do you enjoy the most? (secondary, closed)
 - b. What do you find the most menial? (secondary, closed)

3. What kind of things do you find on your schedule weekly? (primary, closed)
 - a. Monthly? (secondary, closed)
 - b. Yearly? (secondary, closed)

Direct Consumer Care

1. How often do you meet face to face with disabled consumers? (primary, closed)
 - a. Do you meet at the office or in their homes? (secondary, closed)
 - b. How does your routine vary client to client? (secondary, closed)

2. How would you compare what you do to Social Work? (primary, closed)
 - a. How do the two careers contrast? (secondary, closed)

3. What services do YOU provide to your consumers? (primary, closed)

4. What is the most frustrating thing about your job? (primary, open)
 - a. Why? (secondary, open)

Community Advocacy and Politics

1. What is the most important part of your work as an advocate? (primary, open)

2. What community agencies do you work with the most? (primary, closed)
 - a. How did you establish these connections? (secondary, closed)

3. What can I do now to be a better advocate? (primary, open)

4. What is at the top of your political agenda at the moment? (primary, open)
 - a. How did it become an issue? (secondary, closed)

5. What can I do right now to become more involved in policy advocacy? (primary, open)

Clearinghouse Questions

1. Is there anything else I should know about your field? (primary, wide-open)

2. Is there anything I did not ask, which you think is important for me to know? (primary, wide open)

3. Is there anyone else I should begin to form a networking relationship with?

a. Or anyone else you recommend that I interview?

Closing:

Thank you again, Shauna. I think those are all the questions I have! I appreciate you taking the time to meet with me, and to answer all of my questions so thoroughly. You have been incredibly helpful. I know your time is valuable, and I want you to know that this has been priceless to me!

There is a lot of work that I can do, and you provided so much information and direction to help me get started. I was excited about work in this field before, you have increased my desire to get started.

As I mentioned before, this interview is for my communications class. I have an evaluation form which I need for you to fill it in order for me to get credit for the assignment. Please don't be afraid to hold back and give an honest critique. I always say that criticism is the best teacher! Your comments will not affect my grade, so don't worry about that.

Thank you so much! (handshake) Goodbye.

Document #2- Interview Analysis

Date: October 1, 2012

To: Dr. Clark

From: Stacy Davis

Subject: Interview Project, Analysis Memo

For this project I had the opportunity to interview Shauna Brock, Independent Living Expert at the Utah Independent Living Center. I have been to the center a lot in the past 2 years as a consumer, but I was interested this time in speaking to someone not as a client, but as a peer or mentee. Shauna seems to do just about everything at UILC, and so I thought she would be the perfect person to interview. We were originally going to meet at the center and do a behind the scenes tour, but she had another commitment and had less time than we initially expected. So instead we met at a coffee shop and we scheduled another time next week for me to go in and ask her a few follow up questions and receive a tour. Even in the short 30 minutes we had together I learned SO much, and I am so grateful for the honest and thorough answers she provided me. This memo contains a summary of what I learned, and how I intend to apply the information to the rest of my schooling and my future career in social work and disability advocacy.

Typical Routine

When I asked Shauna my first question she told me that she wanted to “rewind” and explain to me the definition and origin of Independent Living before we really dove in to the rest of the interview. She said that it would help me understand the importance of tasks that might otherwise seem menial, and she was correct.

The “father” of Independent Living is Ed Roberts. Ed was a polio survivor who was severely handicapped. He applied to Berkeley, and one of the UC Berkeley deans famously commented, *“We’ve tried cripples before and it didn’t work.”* He went on to not only graduate, but receive a grant to open the first Center for Independent Living in 1972. Today there are more than 400,000 such centers. When asked about

what the most important thing he taught was, he said simply: “*Advocacy, advocacy, advocacy.*” Shauna explained that she interprets this to mean that there are multiple levels of advocacy and work to be done and that in all things they must remember that the most important thing is teaching the individual to advocate for themselves.¹

When we got into her routine, Shauna explained that the Utah center is open from 8:00 am-5:00 pm and they offer a minimum of 2 “classes” per day. One way that they advocate and teach individuals to advocate for themselves is by teaching individuals with disabilities independent life skills such as cooking and sewing. They also have a support group for newly disabled people, and a class simply called “Advocacy” in which they study history of disability rights, discuss their own issues and needs, and advocate for small changes within the community. Shauna teaches almost all of these classes. She also writes a monthly newsletter and calendar, and attends annual fundraisers, galas and political events.

Direct Consumer Care

Shauna advocates for clients up-close and personally by meeting with them in the office or at their homes 2-3x per week. Depending on who the client is, she attends Vocational Rehab or Workforce Services meetings with them, helps with simple tasks like home organizing and budgeting, or helps them run errands.

The most frustrating thing about her job is when the parent of an individual with a disability intervenes in an attempt at, to put it bluntly, keeping their crippled child more crippled. There are very limited rights that the UILC actually has, and they cannot overstep the guardian. That can be incredibly frustrating. This same feeling can occur when the person with a disability self-sabotages. Shauna cares so much, it really seems to upset her when she cannot succeed in helping individuals move toward independence.

When I asked her about how what she does compares to traditional social work, Shauna explained that social work operates on a medical model (which diagnoses diseases and disabilities and prescribes medications and therapeutic interventions) and a sociological model (which regards the “real” disability in our world as lack of accessibility and other oppressions). While Independent Living functions as its own model, which regards disability as whatever makes the individual FEEL disabled. Be it their disease,

¹ http://www.ilusa.com/links/022301ed_roberts.htm

the lack of a ramp, or simply their inability to cook. Granted, there does require some actual documented disability in order to utilize UILC services- but after that diagnosis is given the individual gets to decide how to interpret it and how it affects their life. So they work beyond social work- they can intervene earlier, and maintain services longer. I found this discovery absolutely fascinating, and it makes me even more interested in taking my social work career in an advocacy direction.

Community Advocacy and Politics

There are so many forms of advocacy that Shauna engages in; she found it hard to single out which one was the most important, but she emphasized over and over the small forms of advocacy which I would not ordinarily think of, like teaching them to cook or pay their bills. She works with agencies like Vocational Rehab, Workforce Services, the Disability Resource Centers at the local colleges, and with the Utah Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities. She built these connections over years and years of networking, fundraising and volunteering. Something which I did not know before this interview is that she does most of her community and political work SEPARATE from her work at UILC. This is partially why I had to edit my interview outline, because she could not discuss politics as much as I initially wanted her too. We are going to meet again on less “official” business and discuss it further, but she felt uncomfortable sharing too much with me right away. ²

She recommended that I connect with Voc Rehab and the Utah LCPD to learn more about the political aspect.

Analysis of Social Work (Disability Advocacy) As My Career Choice

Going into this interview I felt fairly confident in my advocacy knowledge, especially in connection with disability. I run one of the largest disability and chronic illness blogs on the web, and I spend 10-20 hours per week doing online advocacy. However, Shauna taught me so much! She confirmed that I am headed in the right direction, and really validated the work I have done so far. She also educated me (in such a short amount of time!) on the history of her end of the Disability Rights Movement and the purpose of independent living.

² <http://www.lcpdut.org/>

I learned about the multiple functions of advocacy, from intimate life skills, to teaching people to speak up for themselves, to requesting ramps and sidewalks to be fixed, to full blown policy reform. Shauna also helped me remember the importance of focusing on what the client *wants*, what the client *needs*, and what is in *THEIR* best interest, to provide them the utmost independence.

I also look forward to meeting with her again and pursuing the political side of things. I am going to remember the simple mantra: “Advocacy, Advocacy, Advocacy” in my work and my studies from now on.

Analysis of my Interview Process

This assignment taught me a lot about myself. I have quite a lot of interview experience, from dozens of interviews as a boss hiring new assistants, to interviews as a recreation therapists doing intake assessments, to interviews as an activities director for the monthly newsletter in my job at a nursing home. I learned a few things about my strengths and weaknesses; I feel like I am strong in my ability to make a personal connection and build rapport, and in my ability to ease someone’s discomfort. However, I also learned that as an interviewER I struggle with keeping the pace of the interview, and keeping the subject on target! Shauna and I strayed from the script just a bit, and I noticed a bit of anxiety in trying to bring us back on target. Next time I would like to spend more time reviewing the interview outline (or sample interviews if I am the interviewee) I also noticed a bit more anxiety than I would have liked, and I would like to practice more relaxation exercises next time. I also think it would be helpful to take better notes during or bring a recorder. I was worried about giving eye contact and focusing on Shauna, and I think I would have retained more had I documented more during our meeting.

In summary, I found this experience incredibly informative, and I plan to continue and have a “part 2” to this interview with Shauna again next week. She is also looking into people who she could connect me with so that I could build even more connections with individuals in the field.

Document 3- Formal Letter of Thanks

Stacy Davis-Stanford
157 e Downington Ave
SLC, UT 84115
October 1, 2012

Shauna Brock
UILC
3445 South Main Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84115-4418

Dear Shauna,

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me last week for the Career Research Interview for my Communications class. Not only did it fill the necessary requirements for my assignment, it also taught me SO much that I can apply to my current role as an advocacy blogger and Social Work student, and for my future role as a Social Worker/Disability Advocate. Specifically, I learned the importance of doing small things, and of allowing the voice of the person with the disability to be heard.

I really admire the work that you do, and the dedication and passion you have for your career. I know that working in the human services field will never make us rich or famous, but from the way you act I would never guess that you weren't earning millions! You are so dedicated to the people you serve and the causes you support; you are an example to anyone looking to enter the field. I especially admire the way you commit yourself completely to advocacy- not just from 9 to 5. You work on Capitol Hill in your *spare* time, and you do volunteer work, campaigning, writing, and blogging all on your own. That shows real dedication and incredible passion. This is such a wonderful example to me- your fire is contagious! The background information you gave me about Ed Roberts and the history of Independent Living is beneficial to me today in my work as a blogger, and an important thing for me to keep in mind for my future career as a social worker. You also gave me a real insight into the inner workings of the day to day, week to week, year to year worker in the field—which only made me want to pursue it more!

Finally I want to express how much I appreciate the information you shared on a personal level. As a person with a disability striving to be heard and to make a difference in the world you really helped me feel empowered. You didn't just provide empty encouragement like: "You can do it!" or "The only disability in life is a bad attitude!" You gave me specific steps that I can take now and in the future to create change in my own life, in my local community, and in the world. You motivated me to continue my education in this field, because after speaking to someone who lives the work, I can say that I am not only cut out for it- I can't wait to get started!

Thank you again,

Stacy Davis-Stanford