

Interview Transcription. Total time: 18 minutes, 14 seconds.

Maggie Lecos: Interviewer

Sam Parelhoff: Interviewee

Maggie Lecos: Ok so what is your name and your year and your major?

Sam Parelhoff: My name is Samuel Parelhoff, I'm a junior this year and I'm a history major and I'm from Falls Church, Virginia.

ML: Excellent. And what do you do? What's your job?

SP: I'm a delivery driver for Papa John's pizza in Blacksburg.

ML: How, uhm, long have you worked there?

SP: Going on about three months now.

ML: Three months? Really?

SP: Yeah.

ML: And how did you come to work at Papa John's?

SP: Well, honestly, over the summer I was just looking for a job and they were hiring so I figured it would be a good job to pick up... make some easy money and tip out at the end of the night.

ML: Do you get to keep your tip, whatever you get?

SP: Yep, mhm. [Nods head]

ML: Ok, are you a full time or part time employee?

SP: Uhm, I only work part time. It ends up being between seventeen to twenty-five hours a week.

ML: And do you get to choose your own hours, your own schedule?

SP: More or less, I told my boss at the beginning of the year what I'd be able to work with school and everything; and he's given me a schedule that I, that works out pretty well. I usually take a dinner shift on Monday night, which is about four to nine o'clock, and then I'll work, uhm, two closing shifts Tuesday and Wednesday, which is from five to one-thirty in the morning.

ML: Wow. Ok, uhm, do you- do you pay for your own gas when you deliver or do they pay for it?

SP: Uhm, majority of it is probably coming out of my own pocket, but they do give us, like, a stipend for how many miles and how much overall money we do that day. So, uhm, I'd say about, like, thirty percent of the tip money I get at the end of the night is the gas money that they give, so it works out.

ML: Hmm, wow, that's crazy. Ok uhm, what are your main responsibilities at your job on a daily basis?

SP: All right, so the delivery drivers at Papa John's aren't like most other delivery companies where they are just delivering pizzas, we basically got to, uhm, answer phones, take orders, uhm we prep the boxes, we fold boxes when we're not doing anything. We've got to make pizzas- I'm just recently learning how to toss dough, so I'm doing that too, now- uhm, and then delivering the pizzas on time and efficiently.

ML: Ok, what part of your job do you enjoy the most?

SP: Honestly, the days that we're really busy and I can just stay in my car the whole time, it just passes the time really fast listening to music, delivering pizzas... makes the day go by real fast.

ML: How far around Blacksburg do you deliver? Or just, like, a small area?

SP: Uhm, we've actually got the biggest delivery zone in this area, we go, gosh, pretty much all the way up Main Street until, like, pretty much past Maple Ridge, is where we cut off, and then we'll go out to Foxridge that way, and then South Main we'll go all the way down to like, the hospital. And... the other side of that, I guess, is just on the way to the hospital on the east side, just like as far as you can go, pretty much, is covered.

ML: Do you feel like you impact people's lives doing your job?

SP: Oh yeah, bringing 'em food [chuckles] especially the people that are really hungry I guess. I dunno, there are regular customers who get Papa John's a lot, so, I mean, I guess... [chuckles].

ML: Do you feel like you've connected with those people?

SP: Oh yea, definitely. Every now and again you get some people that you can talk to and chat with, it's nice.

ML: What part do you dislike most about your job?

SP: Uhm, there are slow days where we've got to answer phones a lot, I really *don't* like answering phones that much, no one does, just cause...

ML: Why?

SP: We've got to deal with customers that... I don't know, a lot of people are great and they know what they're doing, but a lot of people are either, like, drunk at the end of the night and they can't get their, you know, what they want across; or they'll just argue about the prices with you, which, as like an employee I really have no responsibility over, so, uh, I really don't know what to tell them a lot of the time.

ML: [chuckles] How often do you get paid?

SP: It's every two weeks but at the end of every shift I get... yeah, about fifty bucks a night in tips on average.

ML: Wow, ok, do you pay your own tuition?

SP: Uh, no I don't. My father pays my tuition.

ML: That's nice. So if you are not using your money for your tuition bill, what does it mainly go towards, do you think?

SP: Uhm, mostly putting it towards, just like, food and living expenses; and then I'll pitch in on my, like, utilities, at the end- or whenever our bills come out. So, that's about it...

ML: Ok, uhm... Ok, describe the best day that you've ever had working.

SP: Hmm... all right well, the best day I ever had working... started out being *the worst* because I tried to, I switched my closing shift the night before and took someone's early morning shift, and I didn't realize that I had a closing shift that same day, so I ended up working, like, a sixteen and a half hour day, from ten in the morning to, like, one-thirty at night. Uhm...

ML: Oh my god...

SP: Yeah, it was pretty bad to start off but I ended up with like, you know, close to two-hundred bucks in tips and a lot of hours; and I got a lot of really good tips that day, a couple really big orders, which is always really nice, so then you'll boost your gas stipend and you'll get a really nice tip on it. Uhm, so yeah, I mean, I started out the day really crappy and I was pretty exhausted from the night before, we'd had like a party at my place I think, but all throughout the day I was just getting a lot of orders and we were really busy, and... I dunno. [chuckles]

ML: Sounds good.

SP: Yeah, it ended up being a good day.

ML: Ok, on the other side, what's the *worst* experience or *worst* day?

SP: The worst days, honestly, its just like circumstantial, just cause people won't give you tips, so they'll stiff you a lot, you'll have to go to campus a lot- I really don't like going to Tech campus, just cause, we can't go in the dorms, so a lot of the times kids won't answer their phones so I'll just be waiting outside them, a lot of times I'll just have to take the orders back and wait 'til they call, but, uhm...

ML: How often does that happen?

SP: I mean, I experience it a lot going to campus, just cause kids will place the orders online and they just won't know that have to, like, be by their phones, and they'll just wait for you... So, I'd say it happens like, thirty percent of the time, with on-campus orders, to dorms at least... But yeah the worst days will just be the days where your in-store, knowing that you're not really making any money.

ML: Yeah... what's the best type of customer you've encountered?

SP: Uh, well, like the best type of customer I've encountered like, on the phone, is like the one that knows what they want right off the bat. They won't, you know, ask a lot of questions cause a lot of times we're busy and I need to get out and take orders, and have orders piling up and waiting, so a good customer knows what they want, if it's a credit card order they have their credit card ready; you know, they'll say the numbers clearly, they'll speak clearly into the phone, they won't be like, screaming and stuff, and... they'll be respectful of what I'm doing. And then, uhm, on the road, I guess it just really breaks down to how nice the person is when they answer the door and how big a tip they give.

ML: Yeah... [clears throat] Do you receive benefits from your job?

SP: Uh, no... not at all...

ML: Why not?

SP: I mean, I'm only working part time, I guess, so yeah...

ML: You're not making 40 hours a week...

SP: Yeah...

ML: Uhm, do you see yourself continuing to work here after you graduate?

SP: Uhm... probably not after I graduate, [chuckles] I'm definitely not gonna be around here, so, I mean, I don't see me getting a delivery job again after Papa John's. Probably try and get a real job...

ML: What about short term, in the next couple years or more?

SP: Oh, definitely, if I need money or anything I'd definitely go back. It's a good job and it makes quick cash and everything.

ML: Excellent. Uhm, ok what is, like, the chain of command; or, like, the structure of Papa John's?

SP: All right. So, I'm not *completely* sure, but my manager, Corey, is basically like the acting manager of the store, of like, this Blacksburg Papa John's; and then there's a district manager, like a regional manager- Jamie- who runs, like, the Radford, uhm, Blacksburg and Christiansburg Papa John's. So, pretty much all like the main orders are coming down from him, like, you know, he's just like emphasizing, uhm, company policy and, you know, what to wear and how to look; and then my manager, Corey, is basically enforcing those rules and delegating us what to do, and, uhm, you know, training us. And then there's, like, uhm, GMs, which is General Manager, which they will close cause Corey can't do it every night; so they'll come in and, you know, answer

phones, deal with customers, work on the books and everything, do inventory, stuff like that.

ML: Do you think your company policy is reasonable or are there things that you don't like about it?

SP: Uhm, well, the overall company policy is *somewhat* strict, but, I mean, pretty lenient in comparison to other businesses I guess, it was a lot better than when I was working at Moe's. Uhm, I mean, there are certain rules that don't get followed at the individual stores, like I know for a fact; you know cause...

ML: Like what rules?

SP: Uhm...

ML: You don't have to tell me...

SP: No, its cool, I mean, like, uh, one thing that is big now is, like, the driver's didn't want to wear, or like, put the, you know like the toppers that we put on our cars, they didn't want to plug them into their elec- or like the actual car so they lit up. So that was like, you know, people were threatened to get fired over that, so we have to do that now. But, I mean, like, people won't tuck in their shirts or they won't wear hats because they don't like wearing hats, or they don't- something like that- I mean, little things like that. And then... I mean, I guess like, quality control on, like, the actual food; just because there is strict guidelines for what you need to put, like where the toppings need to be... dispersed and everything, so like, I don't know, people don't make them up to snuff a lot, I've noticed.

ML: Really?

SP: Ha, yeah... but nobody really notices, its pizza.

ML: Yeah. Uhm, ok.... Do you get along with your boss and co-workers?

SP: Oh yeah, I don't have a problem with, like, a single person I work with. I mean, despite being a little weird, and jaded in thinking that Papa John's is, like, gonna be their career choice... but I mean other than that everyone's really nice and friendly, and... we all get along; and when its boring we'll talk and when its going fast we work together really well.

ML: Uhm, have you ever had a time when you felt a co-worker was mistreated?

SP: Hmm... I mean, I'd say overall we keep it pretty, like... I don't know what you'd say... like... we don't really break any, like... sexual conduct rules or anything like that, and as far as diversity goes there is no problem there. I'd say overall everyone's pretty comfortable with their workspace.

ML: That's good. Have you ever felt there was a time you couldn't speak your mind, or like, you felt that you couldn't stand up for yourself...at your job?

SP: Uhm, when I first started working out there, there was another delivery driver who had, like, a lot of experience and like, kinda, I dunno, thought he was, like, the man, I guess; so he was kind of delegating a lot of his responsibilities on to me, and like, at the time I was kinda like 'oh, well he's just doing this cause I'm new'; I dunno, as I've gotten used to it though I kinda see that he was just telling what to do, like, cause he needed to. So... I mean, I dunno, looking back, no, at the time I kinda did feel like I was being screwed out of orders or I was being told to do stuff that I wasn't responsible for, but now that I realize, it's more like... you know, if everyone does everything it doesn't really matter, no one has any problems.

ML: Has there ever been a time that you've wanted to quit? And what happened?

SP: Hmm... not really. I mean, no, I haven't really ever given it any serious consideration. I mean, if I'd have to work and I didn't want to, I'd be like 'ah man, I'm gonna quit', but... most of the time I'll just suck it up or find someone to take my shift.

ML: If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be?

SP: Uhm, realistically I would *love* it if I could just take deliveries; and I think it'd be smart, but at the same time its kinda nice if everyone's helping out in the store. So, if I could change one thing, I would only be responsible for taking deliveries, that'd be sweet, but... that's not gonna happen.

ML: [Chuckles] What advice would you give someone starting out at this job?

SP: Uhm, I'd say just take it slow, and... try to be as helpful as you can, because the more you, you know, put forward, and... step up for stuff, I guess the quicker you're gonna get in, like, the swing of things. Cause like, a lot of the new people won't be able to answer phones cause a) they won't be able to work the computer; or, you know, don't think they're ready to talk to people on that level yet, I dunno, it kinda pisses me off when I'm closing with another driver who won't answer phones... and like, at the end of the night its only three of us; two drivers and like a closing manager... So most of the time the closing manager will answer the phones but when they're busy, I mean, I'm doing dishes or something, trying to do my closing stuff, and somebody won't answer the phones, its kinda bad. But, uhm, I'd just say, yeah, just try to jump into it and, you know, if you mess up its cool, everyone there is not gonna yell at you or anything.

ML: Uhm, what is, what do you think is important for people to know about your job?

SP: Uhm, well... for the people that don't tip [chuckles] I'd say it's pretty important for them *to* tip, and for them to learn its kinda necessary, because we are driving out to them and, you know, using gas money... like, I'd think about it like this- with a waiter, he is doing, like, much less work than I'd be doing- more or less- like, he's not driving anywhere, he's just taking your order and bringing it back to the kitchen, then bringing your food back to the table... With me, I've got to like, you know, take the order, *make* the food, and then deliver it to you, and then, you know, if I get stiffed it's, like, kind of a slap in the face. So I guess, you know... tip well, be nice...you know, we're working, it's tough... try not to give us a hard time.

ML: Uhm, ok... do you live close to where you work?

SP: Ah, yeah, actually, it's about like... driving its about a minute, [chuckles] walking its, like, five.

ML: Are there extra costs involved in you doing this job? Like personal things?

SP: Uhm, I mean... I'd have to say it is affecting my school work *slightly* just because I'm working till like, on-thirty every night, and you know, its kind of hard to get up for a class the next morning after working a shift with just non-stop moving and having to pick up other people's slack and stuff like that. Uhm, other than that I'd just say, like, the wear and tear on my car, and then gas, I guess, but... yeah, and taking away from my time.

ML: Yeah... uhm, where do you see yourself in five or ten years?

SP: Hmm... uhm, hopefully with a nice full time job, but...

ML: Graduated?

SP: ... at this point I have no idea...yeah, graduated hopefully [chuckles] in five to ten years [chuckles]...

ML: [chuckles]

SP: ... You know, I'm not really sure what I want to get- what I want to do yet, maybe teach, but I kinda decided I didn't want to do that 'till a lot further down the road. So I mean, get a steady job, work on that, save up some money.

ML: Is there anything else you want to talk about?

SP: Uhm, [chuckles]...

ML: About Papa John's?

SP: Yeah, I guess. [chuckles] Uhm, you know, I'd say it's a really good change, a group of really friendly people, uhm, the policies are, you know, pretty laid back once you get past all like, the legal stuff that's required of us, and, uhm, you know, I have great boss, a great group of guys I work with, I have a good time every time I go into work... most of the time... uhm, yeah, so those are good...

ML: Would you recommend this job?

SP: Oh, definitely. If you've got a car that gets good gas mileage and... you want some quick cash every night, at the end of the night and then a nice big check at the end of the week- or two weeks- you know, I get like minimum wage so it adds up... it's nice. Yeah, it's a great job [chuckles].

ML: All right, well...

SP: Do you think we covered twenty minutes? [Chuckles]

ML: Probably not... [Chuckles] I don't know what else to ask you! Let me see here...

Okay, what personality traits are required in order to be successful?

SP: Well, I mean, that's kind of an important question I guess cause, I mean, you need to be able to deal with all kinds of people and not be an introvert, because people will have problems on the phone or in person, like, if you mess up an order, you have to *face* that person when you deliver their food, you know? And if you get the wrong drink- or forget their drink- like, that's time out of your day, you have to, you know, you gotta have a good memory, and get like, a good routine down before you do everything so you don't mess up, or, you know, forget aspects of the order. You've gotta talk to people and reason with people if their not, especially when they're *not* being reasonable; uhm, sometimes you've gotta just know when to get your manager [chuckles] and have him deal with a situation. Uhm... yeah, I'd say the more outgoing you are, the more friendly you are, and able to deal socially with people, the easier the job is.

ML: Okay, I can't remember if I've asked you this or not, so if I did don't worry about it... How did you find this job?

SP: Yeah, you did.

ML: I did? Okay...

SP: Well I mean, technically, I found it, like, just because they had advertisements up; I can't remember if it was on, like, a website that I was looking at of openings, which I think it *might* have been, cause I *did* apply online; but, uhm, there was also, like, a sign up on their billboard saying 'we're looking for drivers'; so I just filled out an application online, and like I got called two weeks later and they asked me to come in for an interview... and I was working the next day.

ML: Excellent... Let me check... I think we did, like, twenty minutes; I think we did, like fifteen...

SP: That works [shrugs shoulders]

ML: Dandy! Thanks Sam!

SP: Yeah, no problem. [Smiles]