

Transcript of Interview with Emilie Piscitelli by Danielle Sinopoli

Interviewee: Emilie Piscitelli

Interviewer: Danielle Sinopoli

Date: 02/11/2021

Location (Interviewee): Mississauga, Ontario

Location (Interviewer): London, Ontario

Abstract:

This oral history features the story of a teacher entering the workforce just as the pandemic struck. It details her experiences navigating a new environment in both her budding career, as well as her part time job at a grocery store. This interview details how her daily life has shifted from 2020 to 2022.

Danielle Sinopoli 0:02

Okay, we are now recording. Hi, Emilie.

Emilie Piscitelli 0:06

Hi.

Danielle Sinopoli 0:08

Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed today. I just have a couple, I guess, things to go over before we get started, and at any point of time, if you have any questions, if you feel uncomfortable, or if there's anything you'd like to talk about further, feel free to let me know. Okay?

Emilie Piscitelli 0:29

Thank you.

Danielle Sinopoli 0:30

Okay, so just to start off, can I ask you to please state your name?

Emilie Piscitelli 0:36

Emilie Piscitelli.

Danielle Sinopoli 0:38

And I'm Danielle Sinopoli, and so we're doing this interview over Zoom. So I'm in London, Ontario and where are you located?

Emilie Piscitelli 0:47

Mississauga, Ontario.

Danielle Sinopoli 0:49

Okay, and it is February 11, 2022.

Emilie Piscitelli 0:54

Yep.

Danielle Sinopoli 0:55

And we are family friends.

Emilie Piscitelli 0:58

Yes, we are.

Danielle Sinopoli 0:59

Yes, we've known each other for quite a while. Okay, I'm just going to go over the written consent form that you've sent back to me.

Emilie Piscitelli 1:07

Okay.

Danielle Sinopoli 1:07

Just to confirm that everything is set. So, you have read the letter of information, have had the nature of the study explained to you and agree to participate. All questions have been answered to your satisfaction.

Emilie Piscitelli 1:21

Yes.

Danielle Sinopoli 1:23

You agree to be audio recorded in- in this research?

Emilie Piscitelli 1:28

Yes.

Danielle Sinopoli 1:29

And you agree that the audio recording will be archived through the COVID-19 archive.org?

Emilie Piscitelli 1:37

Yes.

Danielle Sinopoli 1:38

Okay. Excellent, and then just to confirm... you... Actually, I think that's all we have to cover in that regard. Okay.

Emilie Piscitelli 1:54

Okay.

Danielle Sinopoli 1:55

So let me just give you a quick little rundown of sort of this project before we begin.

Emilie Piscitelli 2:03

Okay.

Danielle Sinopoli 2:04

And please let me know if you have any questions. So, this project is through Arizona State University, the Journal of Plague Year, an archive of COVID-19, shortened to JOTPY, as we talked about in class. It's through the Western Public History program. As a student in that program, one of our main projects is to complete an oral history interview, and it will be featured in the exhibit Far- 'From Far and Wide,' which explores and interprets Canadian experiences of the novel Coronavirus. So we're partnered with this university in the United States, and we are part of the Canadian front of the exhibition.

Emilie Piscitelli 2:49

Okay.

Danielle Sinopoli 2:50

So the questions I'm going to ask are- will cover a range of topics that will sort of help future researchers understand our experience with COVID, and we are going at this, I guess more, not just as myself as a historian asking you questions, but almost like a conversation. So we just want to see your experiences with COVID, any stories you have, any impacts how it's affected

your daily life? I guess your goals, and anything in that regard?

Emilie Piscitelli 3:23

Okay.

Danielle Sinopoli 3:24

So the questions I have, I have a list here. Some are more applicable than others, and I will adjust accordingly and based on what answers you provide, I will ask additional questions.

Emilie Piscitelli 3:37

Okay.

Danielle Sinopoli 3:38

Okay, do you have anything you'd like to talk about before we get started?

Emilie Piscitelli 3:44

No, I'm ready to answer your questions.

Danielle Sinopoli 3:47

Okay. Excellent, so just to kick it off. What do you remember from the start of this pandemic?

Emilie Piscitelli 3:56

I remember my- the first day that this pandemic started, well actually sorry, not the first day, but the first day that it was, like considered a state of emergency was my very first day supply teaching ever, and so it was my very first day. So, I was kind of thinking that was the first day [computer sound] that I'd be starting to supply for the rest of that year for, I mean, the rest of that school year, and I remember leaving and then seeing on the news that schools were being closed and I kind of thought okay, well, I guess I'm not working for the next – the rest of the school year because we're going to be online. And yeah, I remember we were all kind of panicked, and I work in a grocery store. So I remember right after I left the school where I was supply teaching at, it was crazy. Everyone- it was busy. Everyone was like stocking up on food because they were nervous that we're now in this state of emergency.

Danielle Sinopoli 4:52

Okay, and I think just for some clarification, would you be comfortable giving some background on I guess, your schooling and sort of where exactly, I guess, exactly where you work just so...

Emilie Piscitelli 5:03

Oh, yeah.

Danielle Sinopoli 5:03

...we get a better picture of even that day for you.

Emilie Piscitelli 5:07

So I am a teacher. I went to Tyndale University for teachers' college, and so I started off supplying for the Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board, and that's kind of where I started off. But then I do also work at Longos, which is a grocery store, part time. So, that's kind of where- how that first day kind of started off with in school, and then kind of going to Longos afterwards where I also work.

Danielle Sinopoli 5:35

So you sort of have that, I guess, initial sort of contact on two fronts, really?

Emilie Piscitelli 5:42

Yes. Yeah. So I guess I would say for me, like at the beginning was COVID, everyone kind of panicked, and a lot of people right from the start, stayed home and wasn't really- weren't really going out, and they kind of were isolating themselves, because a lot of people were working from home, but because I was in a grocery store, and we stayed open the whole time, I almost kind of like, didn't really have a choice to kind of stay home and isolate. I mean, unless I wanted to stop working, but in that case, I didn't I had to keep working, because I couldn't be supplying online at that point. So I did have to continue working at the grocery store. So for me, it was, there was no like, I guess, super scary point where I felt like I needed to isolate, really, because I didn't have a choice. So, I had to work the – really the entire time.

Danielle Sinopoli 6:31

That's, I think, a really unique experience that of course we see in the medical field and in- I guess, essential jobs, but I think for a little bit at least the idea of like the grocery store worker being essential was flip-flopped, because, of course, people associated general- or at least they don't really think about it all the time, but especially in those beginning sort of months, definitely sort of saw like a great impact.

Emilie Piscitelli 7:05

Yeah, yeah, we were- we were really busy, and then even, like, where I work, Longos, they created that mask mandate before anyone else did. So that was kind of interesting, because we all started wearing masks, and kind of like before we had to, right? So that was interesting as well, and yeah, I really just had to like, put myself in a situation where like, I almost couldn't be scared or worried about working or having to isolate because I didn't really have a choice, right? Unless I wanted to quit. [Laughs]

Danielle Sinopoli 7:41

Okay, so I think tying that in with sort of what, I guess, you thought about the virus. So you mentioned you didn't really have a choice? Did you find it difficult, or I guess, would you say you compartmentalized that whole experience so that you could sort of do your job? Or like, how did you sort of cope, especially in the beginning, when I feel a lot of questions were still unanswered.

Emilie Piscitelli 8:07

So at the beginning, it was kind of difficult, just because it was kind of like we all had questions, we didn't really know what was happening, and like I was nervous, but again, like I didn't really have a choice. Like I felt like I just, I had to be working because I again, I didn't want to quit, and I didn't want to just stay home and you know, not really make money. So it was kind of like, difficult in the sense of like just not really knowing what was happening, and you know, people like would come into the store, and they're all worried and they're wearing gloves, and like double masks, and they're all scared, and we're kind of just like, have to be like this for eight hours a day, working type of thing. So, but I kind of just thought of it is like, "I don't really have a choice, and I just have to do what I have to do", and kind of put those worries behind me, and there's obviously like you have the support system with the people you work with. You can just relate to them, right? They're in the same boat as you and yeah, you just got to do what you got to do.

Danielle Sinopoli 9:04

Okay, that's a very interesting approach, I find that, maybe not, I guess is possible for everybody. So it's- it's interesting to sort of hear how you've managed personally...

Emilie Piscitelli 9:22

Yeah.

Danielle Sinopoli 9:22

...especially in that environment.

Emilie Piscitelli 9:25

Yeah, I know it- because I know a lot of people at the beginning like people, my family and friends and things they just kind of like isolated and stay home- stayed home for that whole beginning. But again, since I couldn't really, I just kind of had to be brave and just like, pull through I guess. Which I think was better for me because I feel like if at the very beginning I was super scared and stayed home and didn't work and isolated myself it would have been harder for me to go out, you know in public and be comfortable with going out if I had stayed inside for so long, if that makes sense. So because I was already working the whole time, I was never really

isolated from everyone, and I was always around people because I was working like, it wasn't really hard to continue that, if that makes sense, because I didn't have to go from like being isolated to jumping into working and being around people, I was always around people. So I just became used to it, which kind of helped, I guess, with like, the anxiety of being around people and in the public.

Danielle Sinopoli 10:24

Okay, I think just going back for a second, and this can be I guess, in regards to working or not, when you first heard about this pandemic, like, what did you think immediately? Was it that it would affect your job? Was it more related to your family? Or was it something else entirely?

Emilie Piscitelli 10:43

I think both, I think the first— my initial reaction because my was the job just because that first day that it really became like a state of emergency and schools closed, that was my- my first thought was working just because like, I went to school for teaching, right? So, that was my first day of like, starting I guess, my career and like, being open to, I don't know, like, even just the meeting the people in the school, I was at because I kind of assigned to that school that I was supplying at. So, I kind of panicked in sense of like, okay, just started this first day at the school and now I can't go back. So, I was kind of panicked in that sense, but also, with family and friends too, just because you didn't really know how would others react and then you wouldn't know if you would see people or if you would be comfortable with being in public with you or seeing you and kind of just in a state of panic as in like, what are we like, what do we do? How's everyone else taking this? Not just me, but like, how are the people that are in my life going to take this? And how is that going to affect like our relationship type thing?

Danielle Sinopoli 11:52

I can't even imagine sort of going to school for this profession, really excited to start have these great opportunities, and then it all sort of coming to a halt really...

Emilie Piscitelli 12:02

Yeah.

Danielle Sinopoli 12:02

...so quickly.

Emilie Piscitelli 12:04

Yeah, so went from like my first day to okay, because so at that now we have online. Well, when we were online last year, you could online supply teach. But at the time, no, it was just in person. So now knowing that schools were closed, I knew for sure, I wouldn't be teaching for the rest of the school year, which I didn't. So I kind of went from like, being super busy, stressed, starting

my career to okay, now I'm just going stay home. And the only really way I'm getting out of the house is working at Longos which I guess is another reason I could– if I go back, why it wasn't really hard for me to work through pandemic because really, if I wasn't working at Longos, I wouldn't have left the house, type of thing. So, that was like my way to get out and be social and not you know, away from people and being so isolated.

Danielle Sinopoli 12:54

So it almost seems like it was like, like a blessing and a curse almost.

Emilie Piscitelli 12:58

Yeah, Yeah,

Danielle Sinopoli 12:58

Like” I have to go to work”.

Emilie Piscitelli 13:00e

Yeah, I say that, yeah, I always say that. Like when people tell me how like nervous they were and like stressed and about like not like being– and I still like know people who to this day are scared to go out, even though places are open, restaurants – things like that, and I know a lot of people who are scared to see their family, scared to go out, scared to do things. But my kind of reason is that like, through the entire time, I didn't have – I was already in public and seeing people because I was working. So because of that, there was never this like- I was never like really, really scared to the point where I didn't want to see anyone because I was the entire time, I was seeing people the entire time at work. If that makes sense?

Danielle Sinopoli 13:36

Oh, no, totally that sort of that, I guess shift many people had from staying home and being totally sort of isolated in your home. You never had that.

Emilie Piscitelli 13:46

Yeah. And that's why yeah, so a lot of people going from that like isolation to then seeing people in public and going back to this kind of normal state of going out, going to the movies, going to restaurants going to school like was a shock for a lot of people. So I think, yeah, like you said, kind of like a blessing just because, would that just, just like prevented all this anxiety from happen from recurring. I think, in my opinion.

Danielle Sinopoli 14:13

Okay, so thinking, I guess now in the early months of 2022, how do you view the pandemic differently? Or do you at all?

Emilie Piscitelli 14:24

So now it's kind of like, I feel like now in 2022. It's almost like it's been two years kind of normal. So I went from like, one extreme like, not being able to work and in terms of teaching to now I like have my own class, and we're- we just learn to live with a virus. I go to school every day, and I have twenty kids in my class around me. So, I've kind of view it now was like, it's been two years. We got to get through it and like, we just have to come up with- well we have been- as I guess, as a society coming up with ways to cope and strategize, because we can't really be inside forever and be scared forever. So right now, it's almost like it's just this is how life is, and then hopefully, eventually it gets better and better. I would say.

Danielle Sinopoli 15:16

I hate to use the phrase, 'new normal,' but it truly is what it is.

Emilie Piscitelli 15:19

Yeah, it is. Now it's like, I can't even imagine not wearing a mask. Like it's weird to me. [laughs]

Danielle Sinopoli 15:27

Do you find you've adjusted well, to sort of the, I guess, new mandates and restrictions the government has imposed? Or do- or I guess does it depend on like what they are?
I'm thinking more mask wise.

Emilie Piscitelli 15:40

Mask wise? Yeah. Like I- well, I have to wear a mask literally all day at school, and then I go to Longos after, and so I'm wearing it literally for thirteen hours a day. So like I'm used to it, whereas others like it's hard. I guess, if you- if you were working from home this whole time, you never really had to wear a mask. So if you go from like, never wearing a mask to having to go out, it's harder, but I had... I was wearing it the whole time. And I like, right now, I have to wear it all day. So doesn't really affect me as much as it would for others... I think... the mask.

Danielle Sinopoli 16:12

So I guess, like you adjusted quite well.

Emilie Piscitelli 16:4

Yeah, yeah. I mean, I wouldn't- I would- I don't love wearing it. But I, because I'm used to it, it's not that big of a deal.

Danielle Sinopoli 16:22

Okay. And I guess, finally, then this is- take your time to think if you would like any, why do you think things have turned out as they have? I know, we've had like, sort of multiple waves and like different iterations of the virus. But yeah, but like, what do you what do you think about – or why do you think things are the way they are now?

Emilie Piscitelli 16:44

Right now?

Danielle Sinopoli 16:45

Interpret that as you wish.

Emilie Piscitelli 16:48

So I mean, it's different for every person, because like I said, for me personally, like things are open now, I'm kind of going back to normal, like I'm at work. I mean, I'm sorry, I'm working. Yes, I'm wearing the mask. But other than that, like work is the same besides the mask. I mean, we've gotten better, like last year, students like weren't allowed, they're not really allowed near each other either. But now we're starting to- so now the restrictions change at school in terms of like, if there's a COVID case, we don't hear about it and it's just treated like the flu, and it's kind of like this new normal. So if a student has COVID in your class, they stay home. But, if no other students have symptoms, and they're fine to come to school, and it's almost like, okay, they're sick, they're at home, it's kind of like, more calmed down, I guess. Whereas before last year, it's like, if someone had a case, everyone would freak out, and everyone would stay home and like the whole class had isolate. But now it's kind of like, if you have symptoms, you isolate and that's- that's it, not really any contact. And so kids in my class- it's getting a little bit back to normal, they just opened up on Friday, I think, we got an email that we're allowed to d – have sports now and extracurricular activities in school, so at least that's getting back to normal. And kids now are allowed to, like, at lunchtime, like they play UNO together, so like, they're with each other, like, there's only so much you can do and you can't like keep them apart, right? They're kids. So for me, I would say like, we're kind of getting back to normal. Because I do, like I said, I'm working, the kids are kind of back to normal, and things are open. So I'm going out, I can see my family, I can go for dinner. However, on the other end, I have teachers at my school, people I know that still will not see their own family, won't even see their parents, won't go to restaurants. So I like, I say for me, we're back to normal. But if you will get other people, maybe their opinions would be different and that they kind of like won't - don't think it's ever going to go back to normal until this whole virus is over. Whereas, I think me, I'm kind of like, like you said new normal. Like, this is how it is, and this is how we have to live. Does that answer your question? I don't know if...

Danielle Sinopoli 19:04

No, it's, it's an open ended question, right? Like it– everyone would answer differently. But like thank you for your input, obviously. Okay, so I do have some questions that I'd like to ask about

teaching, but I think I'm going to save those for a little later in the interview. So I guess to just continue on, I guess more focused on even if the whole interview is pandemic related, but, does this experience compared to any health crisis or crises you may have lived through or personally experienced in the past? Or was it like a whole new ballgame for you?

Emilie Piscitelli 19:42

No, can't relate this to anything else. It was very new for me. I've never experienced— like I am vaccinated. So like, for me, the vaccine wasn't like a, I don't know, totally out of normal for me, I wasn't. Whereas I guess for other people that would be like very crazy for them to have to do. But for me no... I'm sorry...

Danielle Sinopoli 20:07

I guess.

Emilie Piscitelli 20:08

...can you repeat the question one more time?

Danielle Sinopoli 20:09

Oh definitely, I...

Emilie Piscitelli 20:10

I wanted to, I started to go vaccines and then I- then I lost myself.

Danielle Sinopoli 20:14

Does this compare to any health crises...

Emilie Piscitelli 20:16

Oh okay, sorry.

Danielle Sinopoli 20:17

...or I guess even think about – I know – we are a little young for SARS or even like H1N1, if any of that like...

Emilie Piscitelli 20:24

No for me, no, like I haven't like, no, I don't think I've never really experienced something like this ever. And even having to like stay home or people being scared to see others like that's never happened because even before like if you had a cold or you were sick like you would go to school, you'd still see people. Like it was never like this whole thing where you had to isolate

because you had a runny nose, you know? So I've never, ever experienced something like this before.

Danielle Sinopoli 20:50

Okay, and I know you have sort of talked about your typical day. But how's it different from before? I guess before the pandemic? Is it much different? Have you sort of tried to maintain a sense of normalcy? Um, what do you think...

Emilie Piscitelli 21:06

A regular day like? I mean, I guess it's different, I have to wake up and do my COVID screening, which you never have to do before. So I got into COVID screening, before I teach every day, and then I come in. You know, you got to wash your hands, sanitize. Not that you wouldn't wash your hands and sanitize before but now it's more like, I guess serious or more willing to wash your hands and you would before the pandemic. And then again with the students were a little bit better in terms of how we're acting, so that's fine. But, I guess the main thing would just be the mask, however, I'm used to that now. But, and then yeah, I come home, either I'm home for the night. Actually, a difference would be like I tutor, and I tutor online, which if there wasn't the pandemic, I probably would tutor in person. And then, yeah, I would say the main difference, I guess, would be like the masks and the hand washing and things. But in terms of like, isolating from people, I think, right now, it's not as bad because I mean, I'm with twenty kids every single day, so I can't really isolate from people. Yeah.

Danielle Sinopoli 22:16

Okay, what about I guess your personal life? Do you see any major changes in what you do? Or how like, spend your weekends?

Emilie Piscitelli 22:24

No, I mean, right now, no, before, when everyone was a little more nervous and Coronavirus is new. I wouldn't see people as much, especially when things were closed. Like you didn't really want to see people, you didn't really want to go to people's houses, because you didn't know how they feel about it and you really didn't want people coming to yours. So, when things were closed and stuff, very different. I wouldn't see people as much don't see my family as much. But now because things are open, I feel like people are more comfortable, and because we're now two years into this, I'm seeing my friends more, and I'm seeing my family now. So I would say there's not much of a difference right now as much as it was different. You know, when things were closed, and when the pandemic was more new.

Danielle Sinopoli 23:09

Okay, so I guess, on that... I guess comparison, especially I think it's tricky to because 2020 is very different right now from 2022, in my opinion.

Emilie Piscitelli 23:23

Yes.

Danielle Sinopoli 23:23

So when talking about them, I feel like it's two separate eras, even though we're still in the pandemic.

Emilie Piscitelli 23:29

Yeah. I feel like we're more comfortable now. And like they're kind of use well, not everyone, I guess. [computer sound] Like I said, oops, sorry. I still see a lot of people who were still like, isolating don't want to near people but like for me personally, and the people that I'm around, and my family and friends we are a little more open, and I guess, like we said new normal. So we're kind of just like, how long- how much longer can we isolate and stay away, we just got to do we've got to do if we get sick, we isolate, we deal with it, but you just kind of have to go back to normal, otherwise, you will be— go crazy.

Danielle Sinopoli 24:07

Mmh. Okay, so in general, I guess are you spending more or less time like at home now? Or is it just sort of, I guess, you sort of answered that, like in regards to like 2022, it's not I guess, as severe compared to 2020. Would that be fair to say?

Emilie Piscitelli 24:27

Yeah, so I would say like 2020 didn't really – I mean – I went out because of work. So yes, I saw people and I saw my friends that I work with, but I mean in terms of going out at like functions and like getting together with people at their houses or like going to dinner in 2020, wouldn't happen as much as it would now. Whereas yeah, like I said before, now, I do you see people and not really like I still see my I see my family and friends right now, and I'm not really like worried I guess because I'm used to it now. I guess that's the answer to that.

Danielle Sinopoli 25:1

Would it be fair to say you adapted?

Emilie Piscitelli 25:04

Yeah, yeah, I definitely would say that. And like I said, like before, I think I said this like multiple times, but I think it's because I worked the whole time that I was never scared because I never actually, like, had a period where I had to isolate. So, because I was always with people the whole time. I was like, I'm not really like, not nervous, if that makes sense.

Danielle Sinopoli 25:25

Mhm. Okay, thank you so much for those answers. I'm just looking over my questions. We sort of answered some of them. In the meantime, so like, what do you do in your spare time? Sort of has it changed at all? Things along that, like, how are you getting supplies and groceries and medication?

Emilie Piscitelli 25:43

So because I work at a grocery store, [laughs] that's not really an issue because I'm always at the grocery store. Whereas like, I know a lot of people and I hear like just customers, and like people that I know that I see at the store, like they cut down their groceries- like the days they grocery shop, just because they don't want to go out as much. Even now even though they're used to it. It's like okay, like, I don't really- I don't really want to have to go out every day. So something – I see- I see a lot of people like condensing their I guess time going to the grocery store. But for me, because I'm there like three times a week, doesn't really make a difference. And then to be honest, I've- I stay home a lot regardless of the pandemic, but I do like- like I said, like I do go out and see people. So on my spare time, and I would say I do – like right now – like tonight, I'm going for dinner with my friends. So, like I do spend my time even though we're in the pandemic, still seeing people out with friends, and I'm not just staying home and doing nothing. If that makes sense.

Danielle Sinopoli 26:45

Is there anything you miss? I guess, compared to I guess, 2019 or before that, compared to now.

Emilie Piscitelli 26:54

I guess like, I am seeing my close friends, but I guess like just those like get-togethers with extended people, I don't know, like weddings and things like that, like you never do that anymore. I miss- I do miss the no masks. And I'm just- I miss like not having to talk about COVID. If that makes sense. Like this is all people talk about right now, including myself, but like, this is all we talk about. And yeah, I would say I miss like, not having to think about restrictions and things before I go out just because of COVID. You know, like, “Oh, someone doesn't have a vaccine, they can't come”, “Oh, we have to do this before or we have to get a PCR test before we go on a trip,” like having to like, think of all these things before you go and do something or like leaving the house, make sure you have a mask, before you go to work, you have to have your COVID screening. And I think – I guess I missed that like not having to do so many steps before every single thing you do.

Danielle Sinopoli 27:51

It's almost like spontaneity is dead.

Emilie Piscitelli 27:53

Yeah, it is. [laughter]

Danielle Sinopoli 27:57

[laughter] To put to put it bluntly.

Emilie Piscitelli 27:59

Yeah, right.

Danielle Sinopoli 28:01

At least in some regard, of course, especially I think regarding like trips and things like that.

Emilie Piscitelli 28:07

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I've- I've loved to just go on a trip. Even me like I'm like, okay, I've march break off. And it's like, normally, you could just hop on a plane and go, and I am vaccinated, so I can, but it's always that sort of like, "Oh, what if you catch COVID and you're stuck there? Like what happens? I can't work like," just thinking about, like, having to think about all these extra things is just like, overwhelming. We shouldn't have to stress about this right now.

Danielle Sinopoli 28:36

Mhm, okay, so you brought this up a little bit, but I guess if you have any specifics, regarding the next question I'm going to ask, so what do you or how do you feel the mood is among your family and friends and coworkers? How do you think they're responding to the pandemic? I guess if you have like any specific examples, or anything along those lines.

Emilie Piscitelli 29:04

My personal, like, my immediate family, we're kind of back to normal. And like, we all have a vaccine, we were fine to get the vaccine. But like, I do know, some people who, I don't know they're still very anxious about this whole thing and like seeing people and like, being around people who aren't vaccinated and things like that. Whereas, like, my family and my friends we're – like, like our reaction right now is just like get this over with, get used to this. It's not even like a state of fear. It's more of like a state of like, just get it done. And let's just go back to normal. Does that make sense?

Danielle Sinopoli 29:47

No, definitely. It's almost like “let's get this over with”.

Emilie Piscitelli 29:53

Yeah. In my – like for me, but I do know other people who like I said, like I have teachers at my school, who still do don't even see their parents, or their sisters or brothers; won't go to a restaurant, didn't do Christmas. Whereas my family did... does all these things and still sees each other. Not that I mean, it would be different if I had a huge family, like I don't have a family of twenty people. So maybe in that case, it would be different. But for me, I've a very small family. So for us right now, everything's normal. So I would say how we're reacting, is like, we're going go back to normal, see each other, do everything we want to do. And, yeah, let's just go back to normal, I think is what it is.

Danielle Sinopoli 30:36

Okay, I actually now want to bring it back to something you mentioned at the start of the interview, specifically, your entry into teaching. So, like, how do you think COVID affected you, I guess, first, like, you entering the workforce as a teacher? Do you think it made it harder or easier? Or do you think there's – I had, like, how would you describe that?

Emilie Piscitelli 31:03

I would say, entering like the workforce of teaching – harder in the sense of like, routines and stuff just because we had to like, change everything, we started hybrid learning. So right now in my class, I have students in person, but I also have students who are online. So I'm like teaching at the front with kids in front of me, but I also have a laptop that I'm speaking in front of with kids online. So that's kind of weird, a weird scenario. And, yeah, like, it's again, like doing all these things, making sure students have a mask, the constant reminders about masks and see, it's funny, because like, we say distancing, and they do, like they need to distance but then like, they're allowed to play Uno at recess. So it's like, okay, like, are they distancing if they're playing Uno, like, not really. So it's kind of this back and forth where we need, it's like, we have to distance and follow these rules. But also, like, we– they also need to be able to interact with one another, right? I would say harder in that way in sense of routines, because like everything changed, you know, they come in, they sanitize, their desks are separated and not in groups. So I would say like just planning your day, or like, just being a teacher in this pandemic, you have all these extra things you need to do or think about before you do things like even like projects, or like labs and things like that, you have to think about, okay, every single kid needs their own material, because they can't really share – things like that. But I would say it's easier- it was easier to enter just in terms of jobs, because many people retired early or were scared to work. Or, yeah, so like, I think like, I see why – so my first day, like I said, my first day supplying, and then that was the state of emergency. So normally, like you– teachers are supplying for like years before they can get what's called an LTO (long term occasional assignment), but I got one right away after we reopened. So I think, to be honest, I think I got that right away because of COVID, because so many teachers left and there was like this need for teachers. So for having a job, the

pandemic kind of, I guess, helps to be honest, because this is my– I had an LTO when I started and now I'm in another one, I have my own class. Whereas, I think if the pandemic never happened, I think I'd still be supply teaching. So I would say like harder in terms of routine, and like having to adjust everything in the class but easier to get a job, if that makes sense. Because everyone left and retired because they were kind of tired of teaching in these in this situation.

Danielle Sinopoli 33:49

No, you definitely- you had to fill a gap.

Emilie Piscitelli 33:51

Yeah, there's still to this day – multiple – like I see the jobs posted. There's like a hundred jobs a day not picked up because no one wants to work like, supply jobs not picked up. Whereas before it was like you couldn't even get a supply in because – sorry, you couldn't even get a supply job because there were so many teachers and now it's like the total opposite, because of the pandemic, apparently– well that's what seems to be the reason.

Danielle Sinopoli 34:17

Okay, and I – you did mention sort of hybrid learning in the difficulties that poses? Do you I guess, just to confirm, your training while you were in teachers college it was before the pandemic struck?

Emilie Piscitelli 34:30

Yes. So that's another reason why so many teachers left. We're not- we're not- we're not trained to teach online, so even like before hybrid like, teaching online with like, I don't– like teaching young kids grade one like you're pretty much teaching– I teach grade seven/eight, but when I was like supplying before, and there was a point where I was supplying after my LTO ended, and like teaching, the little ones online is so difficult because really, they don't know how to use a computer. And you know, and also the thing with like hybrid and online is like, now everything's on the computer. And yes, technology is great, but kids need to write on paper and be able to actually read instead of having like, now in all these apps, like you can just be read to, you can speak into your computer, and it types for you, and spell check. So I feel like kids are kind of losing those skills there, but yeah, so now- And yeah, so it's difficult hybrid, because, again, we weren't, we weren't trained and it's like doing two jobs at once, because you have to have everything available for the students who are online, but then also have that stuff available in person for the students in person. So it's like, double, and then you always have to be thinking about them. Like, sometimes we want to go outside or do an experiment outside, and you can't bring online students outside with you. So you have to always be prepared for what the online students are going to do, if that makes sense.

Danielle Sinopoli 36:03

Keeping that in mind, do you think it was easier for you as someone fresh out of teachers' college to adapt to this new sort of learning style, learning setting, compared to teachers, that let's say who've been teaching for thirty years?

Emilie Piscitelli 36:18

Yes, because, because I was new, it was easier for me to adapt, because especially like in teachers' college, like we already were- we learned about technology- we wouldn't- we didn't learn how to teach primarily online, but we learned how to like, use tools online, if that makes sense. Like Google Classroom, like I knew how to use it, because I used it in teachers' college, but I didn't know how to like, base all my lessons online and have all those tools ready for the students to do online, if that makes sense. So for me, it wasn't bad, because I'm kind of I don't know, I guess like, our generation, like we use technology all the time. So navigating, that is easier, whereas teachers who have been working for thirty years, and they're primarily doing things in person and hands on, and they had to just jump to this online system that they don't even know how to do, very difficult. And I, like, I have one teacher from my school who's retiring next year, and she always says like, she cannot teach online and she- she just says it's like the worst thing ever, because like, I don't know, she doesn't know how to use a computer that well, and it's not her fault. She hasn't had to, for all this time teaching to teach online, and now all of a sudden, she had to during this pandemic and to do that hybrid. So, I would say yeah, for me, it's it was easy to adapt, because I went right from teachers' college to jumping into working in, in the pandemic. So like, I didn't really have to switch anything. That's just the way it is for me now.

Danielle Sinopoli 37:49

Okay, thank you so much for I guess that insight, because it's difficult to know of course, like everyone, I find a lot of people will know at least one teacher, but you had a very specific experience entering the job force at that time, especially I didn't realize it was on the day state emergency was declared.

Emilie Piscitelli 38:10

Yeah.

Danielle Sinopoli 38:10

That's- that's mind boggling that the fact that that was your first day, it's already scary enough to sort of enter into that profession you've trained for. And now-

Emilie Piscitelli 38:23

And I remember because we were- we got assigned to this to a certain school to be like to be assessed, I guess I would say, like we were assigned to a certain school to supply teach just at that school to be assessed and then to be opened up to go to all the rest of schools, if that makes

sense. So it was my first day meeting this principal that was going to assess me, so I was super nervous. And it was like, okay, it was even- I remember the first encounter was so awkward, you know, and people still do it. Like they're like, "Oh, like, I don't know if I should shake hands with COVID, like, I don't know." Like, that's, I feel like every time someone sees each other, like, it's the first thing we say like "I don't know, what do with COVID? Do we shake hands? Do we hug whatever." So I remember, she's like, "Oh, I don't want to shake your hand." Like that's what the principal said, which I like I knew, and it was kind of like this awkward- it was one like, it was when it was starting. But then right after that it ended, and so, so it ended, and we couldn't go back to school. So that was when there was the state of emergency...

Danielle Sinopoli 39:22

Okay.

Emilie Piscitelli 39:23

...and yeah, it was kind of awkward.

Danielle Sinopoli 39:27

The last question I have for you, before we wrap up, and you mentioned it briefly, but has vaccination changed your everyday life or your view of the pandemic?

Emilie Piscitelli 39:39

Me personally, no, because I'm vaccinated, and I can go and do things. I guess, like I can travel and go out because I'm vaccinated. So it hasn't really changed my view because I was fine with getting the vaccine but I know others, it really affected them like people who don't want to be vaccinated, this has taken a huge toll on them and their anxiety because they feel like they can't do anything and their trapped because they don't have the vaccine, but for me, because I have it, I don't think it's really changed anything.

Danielle Sinopoli 40:07

Do you think it has changed anything in regards to like how the pandemic's progressing? The fact that we have vaccinations available to us?

Emilie Piscitelli 40:17

I would say like, I like I mean, not to sound like a pro-vaxxer, but like, I would say, yeah, it's helping, like, I feel like it's that's the only really way to keep going to get rid of this. But there's also many people who aren't vaccinated, so I feel like they're still going- like there's still this gap of like, it's spreading and stuff, and people still aren't vaccinated and all these protests happening. So it's- it's definitely creating like this divide of different views and I feel like that's all people talk about now, even like in the staff lunchroom, that's all people talk about is vaccines. So yeah, I would say- I would actually, I would say mostly now people are talking

about vaccines instead of the actual pandemic, like strictly vaccines, and having the vaccine because that's all people talk about at school, because teachers, you don't have to be vaccinated to work, but you do have to, like, send in COVID kits. So I don't know. It's, that's, I feel like that's a big topic of conversation right now.

Danielle Sinopoli 41:12

A whole other interview.

Emilie Piscitelli 41:13

Yeah, that's a whole other thing. Yeah. That couldn't literally be a whole other interview.

Danielle Sinopoli 41:19

Okay, so that is all, well, those are all the questions I have. Do you have any questions for me before we wrap this up?

Emilie Piscitelli 41:28

Um, no, I think I'm good.

Danielle Sinopoli 41:32

Okay.

Emilie Piscitelli 41:33

Thank you for interviewing me.

Danielle Sinopoli 41:36

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences. I think it's truly a unique one and one that should be shared and will hopefully provide some insight into how young working professionals have sort of dealt with the pandemic. And I— yeah, thank you so much for your time.

Emilie Piscitelli 41:53

Okay, thank you.

Danielle Sinopoli 41:54

Okay.

Emilie Piscitelli 41:55

Okay.

Danielle Sinopoli 41:56

I'm now going to end the recording.

Emilie Piscitelli 41:58

Okay.