

Transcript of Interview with Ashley Trayler by Camryn Blackmon

Interviewee: Ashley Trayler

Interviewer: Camryn Blackmon

Date: 11/18/2020

Location (Interviewee):

Location (Interviewer):

Abstract: The interview is with Ashley Trayler, a senior undergraduate student majoring in Criminal Justice and Psychology. Ashley is not only a student but a mother of a two-year-old named Adrian. In the interview, Ashley discusses her life before the pandemic, which involved taking care of her son and working full time at a call center. Once the pandemic hit, Ashley was impacted by job loss, facing financial obstacles, and being a college student transitioning to virtual school. Ashley has made many sacrifices to adapt to obstacles that have come her way caused by COVID-19, but she has remained strong by taking herself and prioritizing her health to be the best mother, student, and person she can be.

Camryn Blackmon 0:00

Okay, okay. So if you could please introduce yourself with your first name and last name, your pronouns, your major, and year of study.

Ashley Trayler 0:13

Okay. My name is Ashley. Um, I just go by Ashley. Um, I study criminal justice and psychology. I'll be graduating this year in May. Um, and then what else did you need?

Camryn Blackmon 0:27

Your pronouns

Ashley Trayler 0:29

I- just Miss.

Camryn Blackmon 0:33

Okay. [laughs] I wanted to- the first question is, I wanted to ask if you could give a little background on like what classes you take, your possible involvement with other campus activities, if you have like, another job, your children's age, and if they attend school.

Ashley Trayler 0:52

Okay, um, right now, my courses um, a lot of them right now are just me finishing up like my criminal justice and my psychology degree. I've done mostly all of my SMC courses other than the civic engagement and the capstone. I work. Well, I was working full time for like a call center for anyone on disability. And since the pandemic we are- [clears throat] excuse me, we lost our we lost our job lost the contract. And it you have to fit like certain variables to- to receive unemployment and, um... but I um- sorry, but yes, I'm not currently working because of

the pandemic, and my son's name is Adrian, and he's two and a half; he doesn't go to school. Um, but that's- that's my life in a nutshell.

Camryn Blackmon 1:55

Oh, that's nice. I'm sorry about your job, though.

Ashley Trayler 1:58

Oh, thank you. It's uh, it's okay, they come, and they go.

Camryn Blackmon 2:03

So I was gonna see if you could describe like, what a normal day for you has been as a student and a mom since COVID and like the transition to online classes?

Ashley Trayler 2:15

Prior to COVID, it was hard in itself, but during COVID, it's- it's just kind of like, the days just are like, washed together. Everything- it feels as though like I did something today, but it was really like a week ago. Um, financially, it's 10 times harder, not being able to socialize with anybody normally, really, it's really hard for me personally, because I'm just used to being at school or work and talking to everybody. And this, the pandemic is just- it's made me feel really disconnected as a student and as a- as just a person. And as a parent on top of it, it's just like, you don't know where to start, like, connecting again, like, "Can I be a good person, a happy person, if I'm not a happy parent," and vice versa. So I- I feel as though the biggest thing that I've struggled through the pandemic, aside of like financially, is just mentally, how am I going to do all of this by myself on the computer? It's very, like, it's just- it's not motivating as- as much as it is to get up and go into a classroom and seeing everybody and like, it's weird, but like, smelling the outside for the beginning of the day, you know, you just like roll out of bed, and you turn on your camera and turn on the microphone. And it's a lot easier, but it's- it's a lot harder to- to really, like, understand and be engaged.

Camryn Blackmon 4:00

No, I definitely see that. I can't imagine how you're balancing both like for online school, like focusing on that, but also having a two year old.

Ashley Trayler 4:10

Adrian is- he's really good. Um, honestly, when I- when the whole pandemic happened, and I started facing, like, eviction, because I couldn't pay my rent, I relocated Adrian with his family. So that's another reason why I was just really like, it's disheartening, but it was a sacrifice that like I had to make for Adrian and I to have a better life in the long run. And that just means me finishing my degree and you know, I'm hopefully getting another one I did apply for St. Mary's grad school, but it's just- it is a lot like, you know, so it is a lot to deal with. And honestly, this is one of the first times that I've actually like, I've talked about it because I mean it's embarrassing. You know, like, it's embarrassing to just get up and say, "Hey, I, I don't feel right. Um, I feel like I'm failing as a person, as a mom, as just a participating student." Um, and to ask for

help like, it is just hard, you know? So when you emailed me, you said, you know, you wanted to talk about it, I was- I was just so happy to finally get like that- that relief from somebody who just doesn't like, isn't a parent and- and you know, if you know what I'm saying like, that can't relate at all.

Camryn Blackmon 5:34

Yeah. Well, I'm glad that you did- like this is good for you. And thank you so much for being so vulnerable, and willing to talk about all of this. So thank you, and I am glad this is also like, beneficial to you. My last question, I guess, was kind of like that, like, how do you feel balancing like your schoolwork, and also your mental health specifically?

Ashley Trayler 6:00

Um, well, to be honest, it's really important that you just like- I mean, me, I found myself, it's important to talk about things that bother you, during this time, especially. Like, let people know you're struggling with something so that they don't think like, "Oh, you're just blowing it." My biggest thing during this whole pandemic is communication. Your mental health has to come before anything, even being a parent, like you can't be a good anything without being a healthy person. And I've just realized during all of this is just as important to say, like, let people know your weaknesses. Let people know that you can't make it on time or let people know that you're not going to have something until this day or, you know, because if not, you just leave this like, this gap for people to assume things or you know, just think, you know, you just don't care and it's really you're just, you're trying your best to hang on, but you don't even know how to say it, you know?

Camryn Blackmon 7:06

Yeah, I agree. That is super important. Well that's all the questions I have for you.

Ashley Trayler 7:18

Okay, well, let me know if you need anything. Thank you so much. This was fun. It was nice interacting with a student.

Camryn Blackmon 7:26

Oh, Thank you. Yeah, it's so nice to finally get to talk to someone. [laughs]

Ashley Trayler 7:30

For sure. For sure.

Camryn Blackmon 7:31

Yeah.

Ashley Trayler 7:32

Well, let me know if you need anything. Good luck with the rest of your studies, Camryn.

Camryn Blackmon 7:37

Thank you; you too. Good luck with your studies and good luck with your masters. Hopefully you get in.

Ashley Trayler 7:41

Thank you. Thank you. Have a good day.

Camryn Blackmon 7:43

You too. Bye.