

Life after graduation? For now it's service work

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For thousands of graduating students across Canada this is the time of the year when applications to graduate schools are starting to be answered, job interviews are occurring and plans are being made. For many students, this is a time of anxiety and fear. Choosing what to do after years of school is not easy, especially since the decision comes with the whispers of student loan payments a mere six months in the future.

For me at least, this autumn will mark the first time in 18 years I have not gone off to school. I won't be buying new notebooks or trying to sort out getting into the courses I want. I'm unsure what city I will be in in six months, or what job I will be holding, if I will be back at home or abroad. Life after university is an incredibly daunting thought.

For some, the answer of what to do after a B.A. ends is a master's program. Throughout their education, many students have been told things like "you can't do anything with a B.A. these days," or "what do you even do with a degree in humanities." But what if another degree is not in the cards? And what if you are like many of the students also graduating university who will not be exiting straight from university into the structured job market?

As a student who chose, and had the ability, to go to a university outside of my home city, and did so on student loans, the "what to do after university" question is also a bit different. While some of my peers are looking to graduate school or full-time, career track jobs, I'm most likely looking to go back to what I've done since I was a high-school student, and every summer since I started university – work in the service industry.

I've never held an unpaid internship or work placement. The idea that I could take a summer for an unpaid internship never really even crossed my mind since four months, even working part-time while doing a part-time internship, was unfeasible. As I get ready to leave university there don't really seem many other choices for me as a young student – I am hoping to seek a future that involves journalism but I also need to eat and pay rent. So joining back up in the service industry makes a lot of sense; shift work creates the space for other things, despite how exhausting it truly is.

The uncertainty of the future may at times seem extraordinarily scary, but it is also a relief. We've been part of a structured, institutional environment for the past 18 years. This may be the

first time in a long time where our future is not entirely dictated to us. While real world concerns weigh heavy this is also the chance to shift things.

As I write this I have no real answers to my questions, but that uncertainty also provides freedom. The steps we may take after graduating may initially seem like steps backward; living at home again, working in the same jobs we did when we were 16, but they are only temporary.

So to all the other graduates who will be crossing the stage this May and June who have no idea what their future holds – cheers. While we have diplomas in hand, the future still remains foggy. Take this chance to slowly start to unpack the people we have become over the past nearly two decades of school. This won't be an easy time, but it also we will start to determine who we are, minus the grades and extra-curricular activities that previously made up our identities.