

Project Title: Documenting the CSUSB COVID-19 Experience

Interview Summary

Interviewees:

Jeanna Lee

Interviewer:

Ezequiel Vera

Interview Date:

10/16/20

Location:

Jurupa Valley, California

Interview Summary completed by:

Ezequiel Vera 2020

Topic:

COVID 19 experience in the eyes of a CSUSB student

Keywords:

- Covid 19, Quarantine, politics, stress, community, online

Comments:

This interview gives us insight not only into the Covid 19 experience of a CSUSB student but also insight into how Covid 19 has affected average families in this country

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Zoom	26:38	Covid 19 CSUSB

Related Materials:

Short description of related interviews/material if available

Full interview transcript can be found below.

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Zoom Audio File

List of Acronyms:

JL= Jeanna Lee EV= Ezequiel Vera

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Start of Interview:

00:00

End of Interview:

26:38

EV: Alright lets start, what do you remember about the day in March when CSUSB announced their response to go virtual due to the pandemic?

JL: I remember not being too surprised it was definitely kind of a shock, it was definitely something new for all of us as students and as a community, but it kind of seem like the way the rest of the world was starting to go, everyone else like when you look internationally was starting to go digital and a lot of other places where going under quarantine and so it did seem like our response as a nation was kind of lagged, but I didn't get that kind of same feeling from CSUSB response at all, I felt like we were responding to everything kind of at the same time that the rest of the US was

EV: Okay, How are you staying connected to the Campus Community?

JL: Definitely virtual, I mean I don't really thing you are allowed on campus right now, but there has been plenty of lectures and things like that, that they have been doing online, I don't get the impression that very many people are going to these lectures but I have gone to a few of them and its definitely not the same as being in person but again like I really do get the feeling that the campus is trying to keep us all connected in some kind of form

EV: Ok can you elaborate on how the campus is trying to keep us connected like through events?

JL: Yea like for example the history club, the history club has been having speakers kind of relevant to the social climate, so the history club has been having events about race and policing things like that, that has been really interesting because I think along with the pandemic that's something that a lot of us have been struggling with a little bit to adapt to and to comprehend and things like that

EV: Where you active in the history club before the pandemic hit?

JL: I actually wasn't , I would go to a couple lectures here and there kind of for extra credit, but that's actually a good point that I hadn't thought about, I am definitely a lot more active in campus events than I actually was beforehand,

EV: so do you feel like these campus events online are your only way to feel connected to the campus?

JL: Yeah and it being a largely commuter campus, its just that I was trying to go to class and then go home, I really wasn't looking for another reason to stay on campus necessarily, but having it so accessible having all of these events so I can be sitting on my couch and I can access them that way it does prompt me a little bit more, it just takes a little bit less effort on my part I guess

EV: So you would say that before the pandemic, you were just going to school going to class and then just leaving afterwards?

JL: Oh yeah absolutely

EV: Are you still in touch with friends or colleagues you made on campus?

JL: Yes it is definitely different and it does feel a little more distant, before I had always been pretty in touch with my professors, but before you can just stay after class or you can walk to them to their office and it felt like you were making a little bit more of a relationship out of that, whereas scheduling a meeting and going into a zoom room for some reason it just feels a little bit more formal to me than it did before hand but everyone has been very accessible, like I have talked to several professors that I am in with classes now and those that I am not enrolled with classes with and everyone has been very very helpful, but there is just that different climate with it being so separated, like physically separated

EV: So would you say that professors and students are a little more open to communication now during online learning or are they about the same as when we were still on campus?

JL: That's a good question, it's different I wouldn't say it's the same, because before if I am in lecture for example I am looking straight ahead at the board at the professor and usually I don't interact all that much with other students in my class, but with zoom kind of how it's set up with that gallery mode you're looking at everybody else all the time, it's weird case now I am a lot more aware of other people that are in my class than I think I would have been normally, as far as communication goes outside of the class I think it's mostly the same amount I don't find people more like especially eager, but I think it is a lot easier for people to meet up, because it's just a zoom session, not having to figure out a way to get to campus, because they just take some much more out of your schedule. So maybe in that way anyway it does make communication and connecting with people a little bit easier

EV: ok was the campus community important to you before this covid situation happened?

JL: Honestly not really, like I wasn't really active with anything on campus, um so it is kind of funny actually I didn't consider that to think that I am more involved with the campus now that I am away from campus than when I was physically on campus

EV: I guess you would say it was more of an ease of access with zoom meeting like when you explained before, it's much more easier to jump into a zoom call than it is to arrange a meeting on campus with various individuals with different schedules

JL: Yeah exactly like you don't have to reorganize your life around it, which would normally kind of dissuade me from going to events and being apart of groups, um because I am so busy outside of school, but I mean having to just set aside just thirty minutes to go to an event to hop on a zoom call is so much easier than trying to figure

out you know the hour that it adds to commute time and everything else along the way that you would encounter

EV: What role has technology played during the pandemic and have you had to acquire any new skills to effectively use unfamiliar technologies?

JL: Technology has obviously been the basis of our online virtual transition, there just no way without technology that we could have made the transition that we did, um and the ability that it give us to like still be in school and to still learn to some extent, although I do feel like its different, um it is really cool and I and I do thinks that its a lot.... It uses a lot of applications that people are already familiar with, like google docs, google slides, I wasn't familiar with zoom but the university did provide a lot of resources for people when zoom was just starting there were a lot of classes on zoom, there were a lot of like information panels things like that. So I think that helped our transition a lot, but for the most part I don't think that I particularly struggled with the transition online but I did take a lot of online classes before shut down, whereas I feel like students who didn't have that experience beforehand I think they may have struggled a little bit more

EV: would you say that online classes before shutdown are similar to the ones we have right now?

JL: Pretty identical honestly a lot of professors, I am taking a lot of professors who I took online classes with before and they preserve there format pretty much identically, but I think there is professors now teaching online who normally would have preferred not to and I think that shows sometimes, just in that I don't think that they were able to transition into it as readily, but its pretty similar

EV: what does your new workplace and classroom setting look like now?

JL: That has changed a lot honestly even before shutdown I was always working pretty much on campus, I would usually work in the library during gap periods to get my work done and now all of my work is at home an versus before none of it was and so that has been a little bit difficult for me, I live in a house with a lot of people and so I don't really have like a desk space, um my room has just kind of had to do, I've just had to make do with it so I just have like a lot of papers taped up all over the place things like that, um I am glad that its temporary, because its really its not the same, definitely not as easy to concentrate I don't feel like my things would be as organized as they would be otherwise, but it works I guess

EV: what has it been like learning, teaching, or working virtually?

JL: its like a lot of the answers in this interview its different its very different. With online classes even beforehand I always notice that I didn't feel like I learned as much like got the same experience or that I bonded as much like with my professors, um I just didn't feel like I was making that same connection beforehand and now all of my classes are

like that and so I do feel like the option is there if I didn't want to learn about something necessarily that I could take that route right, if I just wanted to have like a google tab open or something, like when I was doing an exam I could do that now hypothetically like I don't necessarily have to put as much work in, obviously this my major this is the things that I care about and that I love and so I do put that time in but I don't feel like I would have to and I don't think it would affect my performance in the same way that it does when your physically in a classroom

EV: How have you handled the stress from the events that have been happening over the past year?

JL: it was hard honestly trying to adjust to that, I think a lot about people with like mental illness and things like that, there is a lot of people in my family that have mental illness and a lot of the way they cope day to day with stresses or feeling overwhelmed is they connect with friends, they go out and they do things they go out and be active and there was a long time there during the summer where we couldn't do that the trails were closed the beaches were closed, uh you weren't really allowed to mingle with people and I definitely saw a sharp decline in not only like my family who struggles with mental illness in their mental health, but I saw that a lot in myself I saw that a lot in my friends and I think... I think there is kind of an underlying beauty to it, because for the first time in like a really long time we were all experiencing something similar right like we were all going through such a hard time together and so it was kind of this opportunity as a community for us to all come together grieve together, extend this mutual understanding to everyone, but I don't really felt that happening, I felt very distanced from my community, from my friend group, from campus, and that was very very difficult. I mean everybody it seems picked up like hobbies things like that to cope with it, but it only does so much, I am just.... I am very glad that there are some things that we can do now to kind of get out of our bubble, like some of the trails have opened up and things like that. Even though its a lot different how we experience them I think I really needed that to kind of preserve my sanity you know

EV: so would you say the kind of stress you experienced changed you for the better or was is just a change of perspective?

JL: I think both, I think it has changed me for the better because it change my perspective on things. I work in retail and it's a notoriously stressful job, but beforehand what I would use when I was dealing with a very difficult person is would just say its not you its whatever day there having, but now I kind of assume that everyone always having a bad day right, because like I am stressed out all the time there just kind of an underlying current of stressed out that I think everybody is experiencing right now and because of that I've seen in my work a very different attitude from the people I interact with for better and worse, but it has made it a lot easier for me kind of forgive people when there not the most understanding because like I said before I know what they are going through

EV: tell me about how you feel about the uncertainty of the time the political climate and the social disruption as of late?

JL: Its very disheartening in some ways, in other ways it does give me some hope because you can see that people are kind of reaching this breaking point, right where I think for the first time in a long time change is actually going to happen and does make me very hopeful, but its also just very distressing a lot of things and I was doing a very good job at the begging of quarantine keeping up with the news and the politics and everything that was happening but in kind of reached a point where I couldn't anymore, like it was just so distressing that I just had to put some distance between myself and I guess the rest of the world a little bit and even now I usually do a very good job with keeping up with news and politics and current events but I just cant right now like I have absolutely no desire to turn on the tv, I have not been listening to any of my podcasts and I am not reading the news, because I am just so stressed out with you know how school has changed and how drastically my work has changed and how interacting with my friends and family has changed, like I cant really handle mentally anything else

EV: How do you think it would be if we did have in person classes and the same amount of stress was happening?

JL: It would be nice hypothetically if we did have that feeling of normalcy, to kind of go back into old habits, but I think It would be... I mean not only do I think that would be reckless but I think it would just be my brain kind of ignoring the reality of the circumstances right, cause I would want to treat it like a space oh covid isn't happening right, like you can kind of forget about it for just a little bit, but its something that I take very seriously and I don't think that is worth the risk. I don't think my temporary comfort is worth like the physical risk that it would impose, because how I see it its just like there's all these comparisons to the Spanish flu pandemic and that lasted two years right so if we think hypothetically maybe this would last two years. I think my temporary discomfort even if it is for a period of two years is worth the potential risk that would cause to somebody and there family hypothetically for the rest of there life like there is a lot about covid that we don't know right now its very uncertain how its going to affect people in the long term, but we do know that it is very dangerous to a large population of people and so I just don't think its worth risking that so much unknown with my comfort right

EV: what do recall of the political climate at this time and how do you thing the political climate added a new layer to your experience of covid during this time?

JL: well I do kind of wonder if covid, because covid was so stressful if that's what sparked a lot of these other things, because covid revealed so much about like our political climate, are economic climate. Covid just like had a huge impact on people in general that I think is going to take in many cases generations to undue, right like I mean people lost their businesses people lost their homes, for a lot of people like myself quarantine was boring right like that was the bad thing about quarantine, that is was boring and that I was stuck in my house, but there were people who were generally

concerned about not being able to feed their family, there were people who were losing their business, I mean there were people that needed... who relied not only on their jobs, but relied on a steady society and once that was really taken away from them it really pulled the rug out and so I do wonder if it was covid that honestly exposed like further exposed the things that were like already happening inside our socio- political and economic climate. Like definitely... because it definitely added to the stress that everybody was already experiencing, everybody was already pretty on edge and then everything that happened in the political space it just keeps getting worse right, like and I think that's what a lot of people are struggling with covid in general, because it's hard to be optimistic about something that you feel like just keeps getting worse. It is that combination of things like when you look at the state of the world right now you're not just thinking about covid you're thinking about the political implications, the economic implications, and everything else that's going on in our culture right now

EV: Is there anything you would like to share about your covid 19 experience?

JL: Not particularly, like when I think about how it's changed my life the most I honestly really don't think about school that much, for the most part I like the online format, like for me I do very well in it I like it a lot. It's easy for me to schedule out my day, for me honestly the online school doesn't impact me all that much. What's been really hard for me is feeling so distant from the people of my life, because I genuinely believe that people are meant to be around each other, they're meant to be social. You see all those studies about how many hugs people are supposed to get a day and what not, yeah but you just feel different, you feel so much differently about face to face when you get to interact with people on a personal level versus when you don't and that with this whole experience with covid with the politics with everything that's been really hard for me it's just feeling so distant.

EV: okay that's it thank you for participating