

THE EMBODIED EXPERIENCE

Macalester Students during COVID-19

How we feel, act & think during unprecedented times

By Rebecca Driker-Ohren, Inaara Peerohammed & Ella Pinkert



INTRODUCTION

From student Rebecca Driker-Ohren:

The embodied experience of the COVID-19 pandemic is completely subjective, individualized, and dependent on geographical location. There is an intimacy in seeing classmates and friends in their homes, surrounded by their pets, with their parents and siblings' voices in the background. But while we share these few moments together through the screen, we no longer share an embodied experience of college. I hope that this project gives whoever reads it an insight into a few different embodied experiences.

From student Inaara Peermohammed:

The experience of being in quarantine has been different for everyone. The embodied experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown us into a new situation and shown us the adaptability of humans to new circumstances. With this project, I hope to share how our own bodies change when thrown into a new routine and having to pay extra attention to our surroundings. This is the time to take the opportunity to learn and experiment with ourselves, find new projects that we enjoy, and use the advanced technology we have to our advantage in order to connect with people all over the world.

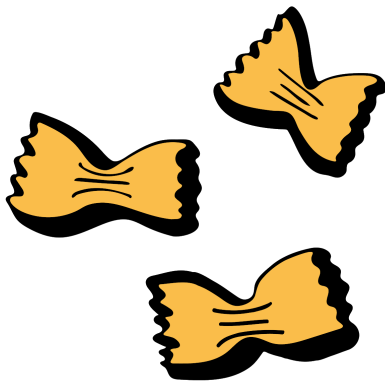
From student Ella Pinkert:

Billions of people have been affected by COVID-19, the first truly global pandemic in our lifetimes, and as such, almost everyone has had to adapt and change their daily routines. With schools moved online, widespread unemployment, radical toilet paper habits, and stay-at-home orders across the world, our everyday lives have been immensely altered. As college students, we were ordered to go home. Since then, we have celebrated holidays, attended class, and tried to maintain sleep schedules in our own global pandemic styles.



Family

Some of us have been using this time at home to bake OBSESSIVELY, and recipes from the NYTimes cooking have skyrocketed in magnitude since the beginning of the pandemic!



The role of family and loved ones has changed dramatically since the onset of the pandemic. College students, like us, find themselves suddenly moving back in with their parents and grandparents, trying to balance our continued semester with the noise and intimacy that living at home brings. Many of us worry about our grandparents -- we spend hours on the phone with them, sometimes helping with technological problems, sometimes making sure that they fully understand the nature of the pandemic and stay-at-home orders.

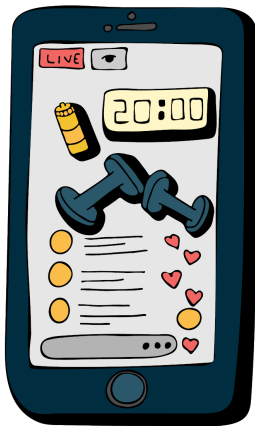
“My grandparents are part of the at-risk population, especially because my papa has had a cough for several months that he has not been able to shake. We call them daily. My papa is usually laughing, he always asks me about school and tries to get political. My grandma, who is hysterical on a good day, sighs heavily and asks if we are healthy.”

Rebecca Driker-Ohren, April 6th, 2020

Some of us have taken to family baking sessions daily, or long walks with our pets and siblings. The more civilized of us have taken up playing cards as a way to prolong the semblance of peace that is so rare when we are interacting with our entire nuclear families. With adult siblings scattered around the country, and Zoom our new best friend, many of us are newly accustomed to being in contact with our family members much more frequently than usual.

Sleep & Exercise

As we try to stay active while some of us are confined to our homes, online exercise and yoga classes (some on Instagram live) have been extremely important!



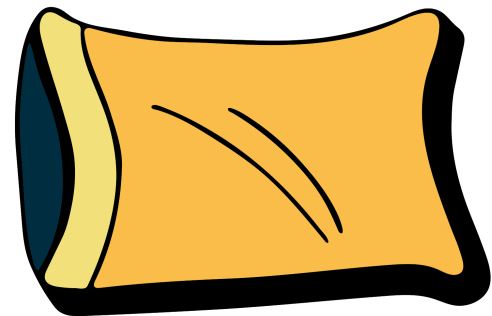
“It feels like a Monday today, but it is the middle of the week and stress is hitting me hard right now... I feel exhausted since I have not been sleeping very much lately. ”

Inaara Peermohammed, April 29, 2020

As most of us are living in different parts of the world, we can see how time affects us all. Some of us have to wake up earlier to attend classes due to the time zone difference while others are staying up all night to attend a class. Sleep, something that most college students need but rarely get, has been different for everyone. Some are getting 10-12 hours of sleep while others are punching through the day with less than 6 hours. We can see how sleep affects our mood and day-to-day lives, making us even more sensitive to the new routines during quarantine.

“Why do I get double the sleep when I’m living in a noisy dorm and going out with friends at night?”

Ella Pinkert, April 10, 2020



Many of us have disrupted sleep schedules from noise in our homes, irregular class schedules because of time zone changes, or a lack of structure..

Entertainment

“Would Tiger King have been as popular as it is if there was no global pandemic? Would The Office be back on Netflix? Would I have watched an entire cycle of America's Next Top Model?”

Ella Pinkert, April 19, 2020



Shows such as Tiger King, Community, Narcos and Love is Blind have become wildly popular during quarantine...ahh, what we all wouldn't give to spend a few minutes and hours of the day in Netflix-land rather than Corona-ville!

While social media is an integral part in the lives of most Gen Z-ers, social distancing and stay-at-home orders, along with the dispersion of students from college campuses, has made staying in touch via online methods integral to our social lives.



With so much time on our hands, we all have been finding ways to entertain ourselves. Some of us binge-watch Netflix, some have crocheted 32 hats, and some have been running for fun. With a surge in demand for jigsaw puzzles and three-day delays in curbside pickup from craft stores, it is apparent that the search for amusement and distraction has picked up.

Geographical Movement

While it is very hard to stay at home, it is something very necessary. Some people have chosen to disregard the order to stay-at-home and put their lives and those around them at risk. Some of us who are taking this order seriously, however, are noticing the differences in the outside environment where people are coming out of their houses to take a stroll around the neighborhood and staying physically active. The roads for some are still packed, while for others, they are empty. Grocery trips seem to be a common practice when people do tend to stray outside of their homes.



“The roads are also just as busy as they always are, so it's difficult for me to gauge whether the stay at home order is effective. The grocery store was packed with people just like any other weekday afternoon... there were not a lot of precautions taken by people”

Ama Kyereme, April 3, 2020

While trying to avoid going out and contracting the virus, many people have taken to ordering items online (from Amazon specifically) in order to make up for a lack of in person shopping. We must be cognizant of the fact that delivery people are put at risk of contracting the virus for every delivery they make.

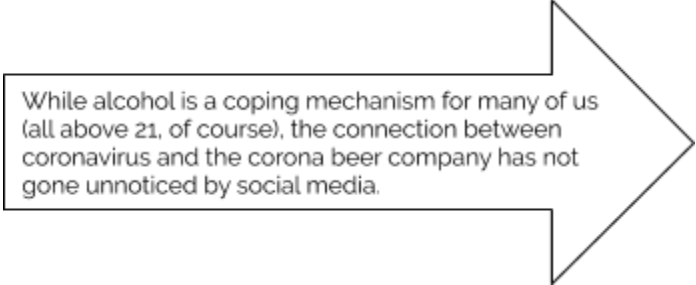
“In Denver, the traffic is always bad. Except for during a global pandemic, apparently. My dad said that 20 years ago, the roads weren't this open, and Denver has been one of the fastest-growing cities in the US for a while. Before, standstill traffic was the norm. Now, highways are wide open.”

Ella Pinkert, May 2, 2020

Traditions, Holidays & Celebrations

“By the time we got to singing “Dayenu,” the Buyers-Pinkert family were so drunk that we dominated the song, and everyone else had to keep up with us. When my mom was opening the door for Elijah, I said: “Mom, don't let him in, social distancing, remember?” She quickly closed the door (a pretty sacrilegious move). Anyways, if Passover wasn't my favorite holiday already, it sure is now.”

Ella Pinkert, April 8, 2020



While alcohol is a coping mechanism for many of us (all above 21, of course), the connection between coronavirus and the corona beer company has not gone unnoticed by social media.



Many changes have been made during this pandemic to celebrate traditions, holidays, etc. Birthdays are now commonly celebrated with drive-by parades and decorations around the house. Ramadan and Easter have been different for every religion as social distancing is observed. People are being creative and making the most of their situations.



“It is my birthday today! First birthday in quarantine, but today is also the beginning of Ramadan in my culture... Usually, my family and I would celebrate by going out to a restaurant for dinner, but we are trying to stay at home at all costs... This is going to be an interesting stay-at-home birthday. I did wake up to a bunch of birthday decorations in my home though!”

Inaara Peermohammed, April 24, 2020



All holidays are much different now. Although we can enjoy socialization from afar, happy birthday sung from a front lawn, and a zoom party, I think we all miss the excitement of joining with our loved ones to celebrate.

Then vs. Now

Some of us have noticed the extra precautions that need to be taken when leaving the house. Not only are people at risk of getting the disease when outside of their homes, but they are also at risk of bringing it back with them to spread it to the people that surround them. While some activities used to be fun for some people, it now has become a chore.



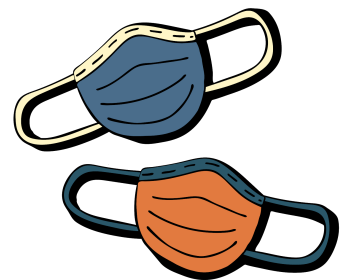
Most of us are now familiar with zoom and the zoom calls that allow us to conduct meetings and classes from home. We have struggled with wifi overloads, computer crashes, and the challenges of sharing one's screen for the first time. We can only pray that by the time this is over, we will all be able to successfully mute ourselves.

“Today my parents went to the grocery store. It was a big ordeal and they spent a lot of time beforehand making a list of where everything is in the store and how to spend the least amount of time there... Then we have to wash all the groceries or let them sit in the garage... I used to like grocery shopping but not anymore!”

Anonymous. April 16, 2020



Things are different now that going outside comes with the necessity of wearing a mask, or perhaps with the privilege of searching for stuffed animals in people's windows, which is a new activity to keep neighborhood kids busy.



Our Inconclusive Conclusions

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Our embodied experiences are different, and while we can generalize and use direct quotes and try to discern patterns that do not exist, our goal in this project is not to do that. Our goal is to demonstrate that this time period of quarantine, pandemic, social distancing (whatever you call it), looks different for everyone. We want to simply document our own experiences in the hopes that they will be useful in humanizing and normalizing this unusual time period in all of our lives.

Credits

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Ella Pinkert, Digitized Illustrations Creator

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