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Memory in the time of COVID

by

William HY Canter

Under the Direction of David Cheshier, PhD

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2022

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines six characteristics of memory in accordance with the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is a major event that has changed how society operates. With the conjunction of digital archives, memory performances have changed. In light of a major world pandemic and the shift to the digital a reassessment of memory is needed. 1) With many museums physically closed, the context of the pandemic with the affordances of technology allowed for memory to symbolically be performed through the digital archives. The future of memory studies must contend with digital archives as memory performances. 2) Computer assisted analysis may help with decoding a broad set, but the human aspect cannot be overlooked. Examining the digital archived COVID-19 memory showcases the importance of human analysis when understanding trauma and trauma recovery. 3) The rapid speed of memory making today and the reduced distance between event and recollection requires memory studies to evaluate the role of time and distance. The expedited memory making creates more references for others to use and abuse increasing the importance of rhetoric to understand all the available means of persuasion. 4) While the digital opens up room for multiple voices, it also allows individuals to be selective. Future memory studies must be aware of how memory performances are used to create echo chambers in order to attract likeminded newcomers and establish a group identity. 5) From the partisan and contested voices, COVID-19 and the digital have created new ways to forget the other. Memory studies must take on the mantle of exposing the silencing of inequalities. 6) Evaluating the characteristics of collective memory after COVID-19 and the increase of digital archives demonstrates the importance of rhetoric. With the trouble of truth and

the disconnectedness between institutions and the people, rhetoric becomes integral in solving the issues of society.

INDEX WORDS: Public memory, Digital archives, Rhetoric, Diction, Health, Trauma

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2022

Memory in the Time of COVID

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December 2022

DEDICATION

To my family and friends who have supported me through the process.

Kaitlyn and Sawyer, this is for you!

Dad and Brother, I finally made it.

Bella and Fridley, I can take you on more W-A-L-K's.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
API	Application Programming Interface
BS	Bull Shit
CC	Coronavirus Confessions
CDC	Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CMD	Computer Mediated Discourse
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
EIDL	Economic Injury Disaster Loan
GINI	GOES Ingest and NOAAPORT Interface
H1N1	Hemagglutinin 1 and Neuraminidases 1
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
Idk	I don't know
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JOTPY	Journal of the Plague Year
MOCA	Museum of Chinese in America
NLM	National Library of Medicine
PSA	Public Service Announcement
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
THX	Thanks
TX	Texas
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
WHO	World Health Organization
WW II	World War II
yr	year

1 WE CAN MAKE IT THROUGH COVID

*I see you, full of sadness
Wondering 'bout this world we've made
There's a space between us all
Love has seen some better days
Oh we can make it
Oh we can make it*

-David Arthur Sikes, Robert Cedro, Tom Scholz

How do we talk about an event that is ongoing? Or how might we discuss an epidemic that has killed so many? As a society, one way we deal with traumatic events is through the sharing of stories. Institutions and people create different stories to cope with and explain current events. Stories of COVID-19 have demonstrated conflicting memories and different realities. According to the Pew Research Center (April 29, 2020) “about nine-in-ten Americans (87%) are following coronavirus news fairly or very closely.” Gottfried, Walker, and Mitchell (2020) showed differences in Republican and Democrat attitudes of news journalists covering COVID-19. Not only are attitudes of journalists differing, Jurkowitz and Mitchell (2020) found that, depending on what news coverage people watched, their reality of the pandemic differed. This demonstrates the need to understand how people are making sense of COVID-19.

Phillips' (Jun. 10, 2020) article talked about people's need for connection. She aptly titled her work, “Dying to connect or dying unconnected: Two realities of the COVID-19 pandemic.” These two realities are on the same coin, both adhering to the recommendation of social distancing. Phillips does mention another reality, where crowded beaches and social gatherings present images where nothing is wrong. Fernandez and Healy's (Nov. 21, 2020) article described these different realities in comparing New Mexico and South Dakota. The former was shut down while the latter was completely open, without mask mandates. Even closer together, Bush's (Aug. 6, 2020) article noted differing realities can be found within the same state. Stories from

an African American living in Detroit are vastly different than a white woman living in rural West Michigan. Not only did this story illustrate the difference in urban and rural communities, but it highlighted the discriminatory attribute of pandemics and the health care system as a whole.

For my reality, I moved and started a new job during a pandemic. It is natural to have reservations or fears over life changes during a normal year. During this pandemic, those fears escalated. I was introspectively living dual realities. The voices questioning whether it was medically safe to move competed with emotional and economical voices. The excitement I felt by moving in with my wife and starting a new job was tempered by the fear of contracting COVID-19 and bringing it into my home and community. My own story exemplified a prevailing question amongst people in the US; is the COVID-19 health crisis worse than the economic crisis.

Crises typically bring us together. Terrorist attacks and natural disasters are often met with patriotism and donations. Trauma can be a cultural unifier. In part of trauma recovery, people remember the event, but also the relief and community that helped them recover. As we remember COVID-19, a fragmented and contested memory is exposed. The memory of Covid-19 demonstrates tension and division. Four explanations can help explain this fragmentation: 1) the pressure to catch the event in time, 2) polarized tribal response, 3) confusion from authorities, and 4) threats to identity. Confessional and archival narratives provide unique insight into people's realities. The reality of COVID-19 is defragmented and contentious. From a memory studies perspective, over produced partisanship has led to new ways to silence and forget. Minority voices showing inequalities are drowned out by the bickering.

COVID-19 has triggered an abundance of stories. While there are typically multiple sides to a story or event, often times the other sides are hidden or foreign. This is especially true in most crisis situations where the predominant narrative focuses on people coming together to help. Digital archives of COVID-19 narratives have illuminated the complexity of our stories. Rather than a unified memory of COVID-19 as a nation, different stories can be found in another state, our next-door neighbor, or even a family member.

In November 2020 and continuing through the winter season, COVID-19 resurged. The numbers in the United States, that once showed a promising decline in May with a rough average of 22,000 daily new cases, ballooned to over 100,000 a day in November (CDC). On December 30th the US hit a daily record of 3,900 COVID-19 deaths (COVID Tracking Project). This was shortly surpassed in January 2021 with six days marking over 4000 deaths, peaking on January 20th with a previously unfathomable 4,409 deaths per day (COVID Tracking Project). While these numbers represented a health pandemic, the impact of COVID-19 exceeded even these terrible mortality figures; the disease had altered society through increased business shutdowns, cascading job layoffs, and periods of distant learning in all levels of education. The reactions to the health pandemic, in the form of policies and mandates, created new forms of stress, increasing polarization and revealing mass inequalities.

Getting past stat shock, an understanding of COVID-19 needs to look deeper than initial health statistics. To assess how the memory of COVID-19 is being constructed, our scholarship needs to assess the societal discussions of COVID-19. The avenue I follow is an examination of stories and confessions found in two digital archives: the Journal of the Plague Year and the Coronavirus Confessions. Such “confessions” shed considerable light on many divisions and traumas enacted by the COVID-19 event.

The concept of event has been theorized by numerous intellectuals, Badiou (2013), Wagner-Pacifici (2017), Gruber, (2020), and Zizek (2020) among them. Using the framework concept of the event allows this study to evaluate COVID-19 as a macro-event, an umbrella that covers and gives meaning to many smaller themes. We need to gain critical purchase on the many ways COVID-19 affects not only health outcomes, but impacts the economy, social relationships, public policy, and memory performances. Stories and confessions help create thematic narratives that demonstrate inconsistent values, differing realities, and a fragmented society.

Within the pandemic different themes have emerged. Stories of these themes, alongside articulated confessions, provides insight into how we cope with COVID-19. Analyzed together, we can understand how people create meaning for the COVID-19 event. The focus of this dissertation is on how COVID-19 digital narratives and confessions, afforded by digital technology- allow for a reevaluation of collective memory. Conflicting narratives create a living memory with multiple realities of the COVID-19 event. This study provides insight into the COVID-19 event and contributes to a growing field of pandemic rhetoric and public memory.

1.1 Timeline of Events

December 31, 2019	First official case reported, a “media statement by the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission” (WHO).
January 9, 2020	Announcement from WHO about a novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China.
January 11, 2020	Chinese media reports first death.
January 21, 2020	United States first confirmed case.

January 23, 2020	Wuhan is placed under quarantine, “all flights and trains departing from the city were canceled, and buses, subways and ferries within the city were suspended” (NBCnews).
January 30, 2020	Global health emergency issued by WHO.
February 3, 2020	Public health emergency issued by the US.
March 11, 2020	COVID-19 is declared a Pandemic by WHO
March 13, 2020	A national emergency is declared, “unlocking billions of dollars in federal funding to fight the disease’s spread” (AJMC).
March 13, 2020	Director-General of WHO announces the epicenter of the pandemic moved to Europe, “more reported cases and deaths than the rest of the world combined, apart from the People’s Republic of China” (WHO).
April 4, 2020	Over 1 million cases reported worldwide.
May 28, 2020	US deaths due to COVID-19 pass 100,000.
June 10, 2020	2 million US COVID-19 cases.
June 30, 2020	Dr. Fauci warns, based on the present trajectory, “new COVID-19 cases [in the US] could hit 100,000 a day” (AJMC). His prediction became true on November 4, 2020.

1.2 Pandemic Research

From the beginning, there was already a rush of intellectual publication activity – research papers, books, governmental and public health reports – to make sense of the epidemic. As the pandemic trudged on, the number of academic articles steeply rose, with journal special editions dedicated to COVID-19. Multiple journals removed pay walls on specific COVID focused articles, allowing scholars and the general public to freely access research without a

subscription. This increased viewership promoted quicker dialogue. As a result, the literature on COVID-19, while new, is vast.

1.2.1 COVID-19 Meta-Accounts

To help deal with the trauma and stress of the pandemic, people worried about the risks to themselves and their families have taken up a number of coping strategies and diverting hobbies. In academia, scholars have picked up the pen (or keyboard) and wrote editorials, observations, and research papers.

Gloviczki (2020) described his own life during the pandemic, providing a moment of reflexivity and encouraged other academics to take a second and do the same. Similar to the need of routine suggested by Biss (2020), Gloviczki's autoethnographic sketch provided him a sense of normalcy and comfort. Reflecting past oneself, and looking towards the end, Maarouf, Belghazi, and Maarouf (2020) "interrogat[ed] the history of COVID-19 with an emphasis neither on its origin nor on its telos" (p. 1). They used the COVID-19 pandemic to "reflect on the complexity and polysemy of the concept of the end" (p. 2).

Jandric (2020) argued "that academics have a unique opportunity, and a moral duty, to immediately start conducting in-depth studies of current events" (p. 234). This is a call to more than health and sciences, but involves the humanities as well. "It is crucial that academic researchers working in the humanities and social sciences immediately join the struggle against the pandemic. In the post digital context of viral modernity, decades of training and experience in any academic field can contribute to making sense of the crisis. Post digital researchers should read, research, and write about all imaginable aspects of COVID-19" (p. 236). He recognized that researching an ongoing event is difficult, and provided some encouragement; "in the midst of the pandemic, many of these efforts may seem useless. Yet paraphrasing John Fitzgerald

Kennedy, those who dare to fail miserably are also those who might change the course of history” (p. 237). While this dissertation may not change the course of history, it will provide an insight into understanding how people tell stories and remember COVID-19.

In showcasing the importance of studying narratives and rhetoric during COVID-19, Dias and Deluchey (2020) argued “the rhetorical resource of the pandemic danger gave legitimacy to the expansion of warlike strategies with the complacency of the whole population” (p. 1). The initial “total continuous war” narrative was available before the pandemic; however, the pandemic helped to illuminate the rhetoric. The authors criticized that within neoliberal governments, particular people are disposable bodies. “These bodies refer to those who perform precarious work activities, which are also essential to sustain social life. The war tactics target those bodies since they are always the ones that can be subject to death without entailing any public grief” (p. 17). Reflecting on the ‘essential worker’ label in response to COVID-19, those bodies become disposable to help keep the economy running. “In this sense, we can observe that the pandemic exposed cruelly the hierarchization and disposability of bodies. Hence, COVID-19 appears to be more of a symptom of waging a certain war than a health emergency that would affect everybody equally” (p. 17).

Academics are rapidly producing research on the pandemic, trying to capture Karios. Among the emerging scholarship, some address how to “help people directly affected by the pandemic through the development of diagnostic tools, medicines, and vaccinations” (Jandric, 2020, p. 236). In psychology, research essays provided suggestions for how “group processes can be harnessed” to reduce health risks (Cruwys, Stevens, and Greenaway, 2020, p. 584). In the communication field, Treichler (2022) has suggested using metaphors to counter false information. “Just as the virus itself mutates, so too does metaphor.” Being aware of the multiple

vehicles and tenors within an evolving metaphor helps us accept the complications of signification. When we can accept the differences in metaphors, we can address the potential need for multiple perspectives.

Treicher also contributed to another theme of COVID-19 academic articles, which is the emphasis on using different frameworks to understand the pandemic. Whether by using mortality rate data (Doornik, Castle, and Hendry, 2021), health and risk assessment (Robinson et. al., 2021), or trying to define the pandemic outside the realm of health (Frosh and Georgiou, 2022), these articles saw COVID-19 as a noteworthy event that deserved attention. While the prior articles addressed how to solve problems, these articles aimed specifically to address realities on the ground. This is not to say they are less valuable than concrete measures. As Jandric asserted, “while we obviously need food, healthcare, and education, the virus can be contained only through discipline and solidarity of all strata of society.” Understanding the virus provides a framework for the larger picture and potentially helps us in fighting future pandemics.

Finally, another major area of research reads the pandemic as an event that alters how we see existing theory, methods, or frameworks. These articles use COVID-19 to disrupt the status quo and propose new ways to view their given discipline. Georgiou and Titley (2022) examined the connection of publicness to COVID-19 and how our traditional accounts of engagement, solidarity, and collective action are thereby problematized. For them, the pandemic is best understood as a crisis of publicness: “The publicness of the pandemic’s impacts renders palpable the need for more thinking and working together, while the dynamics of publicness render the production of collective understanding and mobilization more fractious and difficult” (p. 333). Essentially, the widespread effect of the pandemic requires collaborative negotiation, yet the issues brought up by the pandemic are increasing division, thus making a unified discussion

incoherent or impossible. To address the issue of a dispersing publicness, Georgiou and Titley studied the intersectionality of publicness and communing (collaboration). Their study provided a framework for examining publicness in relation to commoning through three different lenses. While their work focused on theory, their argument touched on both defining the pandemic and providing ways to resolve issues. Their article demonstrated the fluidity of academic literature focused on COVID-19.

Answering Jandric's invitation to "explore all imaginable aspects of the large social experiment that the Covid-19 pandemic has lain down," this dissertation understands the COVID experience as requiring scholars to reevaluate memory studies. It follows the case for fluidity of interpretative action defended by Georgiou and Titley by establishing a framework for memory studies and thereby aiming for providing insight into the pandemic. I move the conversation away from solely the pandemic and suggest a role for future memory studies by researching digital COVID memory performances. As part of this research, I showcase academic literature focused on COVID throughout the chapters to foil the vernacular responses. These papers offer current thoughts and research on the ongoing pandemic. Combined with the countless medical articles and news narratives, they are a part of COVID-19 history. They also work together to form an academic memory of the COVID-19 event.

1.3 Public Memory

COVID-19 is not the only pandemic that has seeped beyond the barriers of health coverage. Prior pandemics such as the Spanish Flu of 1918 and the HIV/AIDS Pandemic have been studied and discussed in terms of their social impact. These past pandemics provide a resource for COVID-19 stories. Analyzing discourse through a public memory lens highlights what aspects of past pandemics are remembered and what is forgotten. One uniqueness of the

COVID-19 narrative is its ability to build on the past. The increase in historical research and the number of pop cultural books on pandemics provides a plethora of sources for people as they use public memory to create meaning.

Bluntly summarizing Halbwachs, Assmann (2011) explained “a person who has grown up in complete isolation . . . would have no memory, because memory can only be fashioned during the process of socialization” (Assmann, p. 22). Being alone does not produce public memory. It is the transition between private to public materialized through the performance of memory in public. In a time where public interaction has moved from in-person to digital, archives and coronavirus confessions become all the more important. The archived stories are instances of public performance, socializing viewers and readers to a perceived collective memory of the pandemic; even if the truth is fragmented. Living through the pandemic, we all have our own private memories. Yet, when bounded together it appears to become a place of commonality. Place, not in the geographical definition, (we don’t want to break any restrictions) but in the visual presence of discourse.

Elements from Aristotle’s *topoi* and the historical importance of memory to invention helped to revitalize academic interest in memory. As Yates (1966) illustrated, the historical path of memory is not a direct line of advancement, but an entanglement between issues and debates. There is no one way to conceptualize memory, nor is there an easy way to trace its history. This project follows the contemporary lineage of memory studies, supporting an interdisciplinary approach to understanding events. The entangled characteristic of memory can be seen through the various disciplines involved in memory studies. Casey (2000) explained, “just as everything participates in memory, so memory participates in everything: every last thing. In so doing, it draws the world together, re-membering it and endowing it with a connectiveness and a

significance it would otherwise lack – or rather, without which it would not be what it is or as it is” (p. 313). Memory becomes interwoven in the very fabric of different subjects, whether the direct study of memory, or the study of one’s own cultural memory. COVID-19 has mirrored this approach and has found itself incorporated differently in multiple areas.

Just like COVID-19 is fragmented, there are multiple definitions and uses of memory, all of which contribute to the field of memory studies. As Erll (2008) pointed out, “cultural memory studies is a field to which many disciplines contribute, using their specific methodologies and perspectives. This makes for its terminological richness, but also for its disjointedness” (p. 3). Amid this disjointedness, Irwin-Zarecka (1994) called for more linkages, “to render justice to the phenomenon itself, to the varied manifestations of collective memory and remembrance, we must, I believe, rely on varied interpretive strategies. At the same time, though, we do need to establish more linkages between them, more of an analytically shared vocabulary” (p. 10).

On the way to establish a useable definition for public memory, Thelen (1989) combined Halbwachs and Bartlett, suggesting memory is constructed with help from interactions with others (p. 1122). Even if memory is constructed through personal schemas, social interactions build and nuance those schemes. Moore (1992) argued “individual memory is not simply personal: the memories which constitute our identity and provide the context for every thought and action are not only our own, but are learned, borrowed, and inherited” (Fentress and Wickham, 1992, p. viii). Pickering and Keightley (2013) explained that “all remembering is social and never purely individual, even when certain memories are regarded as private” (p. 6). Memory is entangled in the personal and social. Personal memories are influenced and constructed by social interaction. The coronavirus stories and confessions bring the private to the public, taking the personal and submitting it to the social.

Blair, Dickenson, and Ott (2010) reinforced the idea that “contemporary scholarship has posed memory as an activity of collectivity rather than (or in addition to) individuated, cognitive work” (p. 5). Assmann suggested that “when memory goes beyond the self and into society, it becomes externalized” (p. 9). The externalization of memory is shared with the collective or group through a performance of some sort. These performances can range from rituals, to ceremonies, to texts, and so forth. Browne (1993) connected these rituals back to rhetoric:

“The rituals of public memory are omnipresent. Historically they include the rites of commemoration by which governments ballast authority against waves of revolt, local celebrations of local heroes, and those countless monuments created by the architects of memory to shape our sense of a shared past. These performances take on a powerfully rhetorical aspect because they help negotiate conditions of community and provide symbols of identity and difference” (p. 464). These performances are public areas of discourse where memory is constructed for a purpose. Browne argued, the “symbolic construction of public memory” is a rhetorical process where meaning making is shared in “public, persuasive discourse” (p. 464). Public memory becomes an important aspect of a group to understand. For instance, what happens when public memory begins fragmented? Does this demonstrate a polarized public that potentially refuses to reconcile? Or over time, does the process of memory making smooth the rough edges to show a unified public memory?

Browne provided three ways to conceptualize public memory in an extension of Bartlett: 1) as a type of performance, 2) as a site of cultural competition, and 3) as a form of social text. As a type of performance, “public memory is created and sustained through a series of symbolic acts. These acts, recognizable as public gestures, take on their meaning and rhetorical force through a combination of custom and vested interest” (p. 474-475). As a site of cultural

competition, “public memory is contestable because it does not belong naturally to any category of citizenship” (p. 466). While it may be socially constructed, public memory does not represent the whole. Public memory seen as a site of cultural competition highlights the struggle to be heard and withdraws the mask of a hegemonic memory. This is the importance of studying an initial fragmented memory of COVID-19. As a form of social text, public memory “can be inscribed and is therefore readable as a type of cultural production” (p. 466). This connects to Casey who suggested “remembering is intensified by taking place through the interposed agency of a text (the eulogy, the liturgy proper) and the setting of a social ritual (delivering the eulogy, participating in the service” (p. 218).

In an example of the contested nature of public memory and a site of cultural competition, Bodnar (1992) placed public memory at “the intersection of official and vernacular cultural expressions” (p. 13). Official memory, other times called hegemonic memory, refers to institutionalized forms of memory. On the other hand, vernacular memory consists of memory from the people. The stories and confessions fall under vernacular memory, while most often sources they mention would be considered hegemonic memory. Haskins (2007) explained the difference, “in contrast with the hegemonic official memory, vernacular practices of public remembrance typically assume decidedly ephemeral forms such as parades, performances, and temporary interventions. Instead of somber monumentality, they employ non-hierarchical, sometimes subversive symbolism and stress egalitarian interaction and participation” (p. 403). Even with this distinction, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two. Official and vernacular memories are often intertwined and influence each other. In other words, they are often entangled. “The line between official and vernacular memory practices, however, is becoming blurry, as designers, museum professionals and art critics begin to ponder how

“permanent” memorials might engage their popular audiences instead of imposing on them the ossified values of political and cultural elites” (Haskins, p. 404). The combined force of the two memories to create a unified public memory opens the door for the “happy coexistence” of “official memory and ephemeral public participation” which protects against “dangers of ideological reification and amnesia” (Haskin, p. 404, 405). One may not need to entangle the vernacular and hegemonic in order to find contestation. COVID-19 provides a glimpse at the contested and fragmented initial process of memory making.

Blair, Dickenson, and Ott provided six assumptions of memory, along with a rhetorical response. 1) Memory is connected to the past. 2) Memory plays a role in forming shared identities. 3) Memory is animated by affect. 4) Memory is partial. 5) Memory is material/symbolic. And 6) Memory has a history. When looking at these assumptions, Blair et al., warned that “we might be wise to think of them as only nominally consensual, given the kinds of issues and conflicts they do or could (and perhaps should, in some cases) inspire” (p. 12).

Dorr, Erll, Hoyerle, Vickers, and Wegner (2019) noted that materiality travels. “Just as people—the carriers of memory—do not necessarily stay put, but can move, travel, and migrate as well as share their stories of the past with other people” (p. 1). Memories move from group to group, in so doing their form and content are altered. Dorr et al. explained as the material memory travels, “the context of memory production and reception change in different institutional settings” (p. 2). An artifact in a public museum will construct a different story than where it was found. If that artifact is bought by a private collector and put into a private museum, even though it is the same type of institution, the context changes, and so does its constructed memory.

One current conversation in memory studies that this dissertation joins is the impact of the digital on the memory performance. Keightley and Schlesinger (2014) explained “rapid changes in digital technologies, the greater availability of historical materials online, and the increasing digital connectivity across the world have kept the process that constitute mediated social memory in flux” (p. 745). The affordances of digital memory have changed the context surrounding memory performances and thus we need to reevaluate how to best approach computer mediated memory. Lohmeier and Pentzold (2014) offered one way to study mediated memory as performances through observation, interviews, and ethnography. Through their study into the Cuban American community in Miami, they suggested the “technical affordances of the media environment” that participants operated within impacted the performance. In other words, there are genres of digital performances that change how people post. The same memory will be performed differently across a private blog with no comments compared to a public forum intended to attract responses. With that in mind, this dissertation continues the important work of comparing digital performances by using two distinctive styles of archives. A rhetorical study of memory analyzes the new context the memory travels within to provide a deeper understanding of the meaning.

1.3.1 Collective Memory

This project also joins the conversation of concurrent memory making and proposes an addendum to collective memory studies. The emergence of digital archives opens spaces to instantaneously publicize and record memory, and I argue that the process of collective memory needs to pay more attention to vernacular initial memory making. When memories arise out of concurrent interaction, Mazzucchelli and Panico (2021) see this process as a sort of “pre-emptive memory”-making, which they define as “an attempt to imagine how this crisis will be

remembered tomorrow in order to gain narrative comprehension out of a present and ongoing trauma that is still coherent with our past experiences” (p. 1415). In summary, articulated recollections are performances during an ongoing event intended to be reflected on in the future as memory of that particular event. While Mazzucchelli and Panico focused on two different forms of commemoration, during the pandemic and of the pandemic, I examine the vernacular responses arising in the form of digital archives.

In order to establish a unified framework for digitally performed pre-emptive memory, I overlap with Zelizer’s (1995) suggested six premises for collective memory. First, collective memory is processual, “it is seen as a process that is constantly unfolding, changing, and transforming” (p. 218). Entangled with public memory, Browne (1995) in a review of four “compelling” works on memory, suggested it is “the rhetorical processes through which public memory makes its claim on cultural knowledge” (p. 238). Second, collective memory is unpredictable, “collective memory is not necessarily linear, logical, or rational. It can take on any of these characteristics, but it does not depend on any of them for its constitution” (Zelizer, p. 221). Third, collective memory is partial, “memories are often pieced together like a mosaic” (p. 224). Goodnight and Olson (2006) explained “as an inventional resource, collective memory resides in an uneven, heterogeneous region where specific recollections are sometimes contiguous and sometimes fragmented” (p.610). Fourth, collective memory is usable, “collective memory is always a means to something else” and it is “evaluated for the way in which it helps us to make connections- to each other over time and space, and to ourselves” (Zelizer, p. 226). Fifth, collective memory is both particular and universal, “the same memory can act as a particular representation of the past for certain groups while taking on a universal significance for others” (p. 230). And sixth, collective memory is material, “memory exists in the world

rather than in a person's head, and so is embodied in different cultural forms" (p. 231). Like Blair et al.'s last assumption, Zelizer explained that it travels in a similar manner, "no memory is embodied in any of these artifacts, but instead bounces to and from among all of them, on its way to gaining meaning" (p. 232). The memory of COVID-19 cannot be found in one place but is a continuous push and pull; from archive to archive; from story to story. The COVID-19 stories and confessions are at the initial stages of memory making. They demonstrate a fragmented memory comes before the possible collective memory.

Collective memory is part of public memory and therefore it is no surprise that it encompasses much of the same assumptions. While public memory encompasses a large area, collective memory can be defined as how a group or community constructs present meaning from pieces of the past, both extended and present, through a process of materializing experience, whether through personal experience, or second-hand experience.

Research into narrative and memory have been used to see how crises bring people together. Narrative provides an explanation on how people build their world view or reality around what rings true (not necessarily what is true). In a crisis, the prevailing narrative can unite a country and justify going to war. Why then is COVID-19 different? The easy explanation is there is no unifying narrative; however, to understand why there is no unity requires an in-depth look into people's own narratives. If there are not agreed upon, what will be the lasting memory of COVID-19? The concept of collective memory as useful for the future is challenged. Memory is a public performance. Each shared narrative becomes part of the memory of COVID-19. As constructed by archivist and researchers the memory of COVID-19 remains partial. Public memory notes the importance of understanding silencing, yet this occurs when a dominant narrative is constructed as the sole memory. A reimagined theory of collective memory that

privileges an initial step towards collective can help expose a silenced other and potentially lead to respecting different realities.

A further conversation in memory studies that this dissertation joins is the effort to recover silenced narratives. Both Sturken (1997) and Trouillot (1995) have argued for the need to expose cultural amnesia and to restore forgotten memories. Their work taps into the call for greater attention to minority voices, but what we may be ignoring is within our calls for minority voices we are creating more noise that overshadows deeper issues. This dissertation bridges the gap between digital performances, pre-emptive memory and the silencing of memories. Navigating pre-emptive memories digitally performed during a society changing pandemic creates an opportunity to reassess rhetoric's role in memory studies.

1.4 The Artifacts

1.4.1 Memory is material/symbolic supported

“Public memory is typically understood as relying on material and/or symbolic supports – language, ritual performances, communication technologies, objects, and places- that work in various ways to consummate individuals' attachment to the group” (Blair et al., p. 10). Memory is shared through material and symbolic means. As both Casey and Irwin-Zarecka offered, memory is not in the mind but in the things shared and performed. Browne found the meaning of texts, whether material or symbolic, in “its public and persuasive functions” (p. 248). Rhetoric is adept at studying the material and symbolic through analyzing a text's meaning and persuasive functions. The archived stories and confessions represent rich texts that are publicly performed.

Digital archives and confessions provide artifacts where the storyteller is encouraged to share regardless of public consequence. Digital archives create a public space where people can share their stories behind an electronic screen. In the concept of confessions, the private

connotation opens space for counter ideas. It promotes honest sharing without fear of what is perceived to be socially right or wrong. Often confessions are seen as taking off a weight by expunging guilt. This coincides with Burke's guilt redemption cycle, mortification or scapegoating.

I am embracing a critical perspective on the archive; in the sense that archives are a tool and reproduction of a culture's structuration of power. That is, I approach the archival material I analyze here as partial, and not innocently incomplete; rather, omissions tend to reproduce wider patterns of marginalization and exclusion. A critical perspective of the archive thus allows the researcher to learn about those controlling and making choices. While some say digital archives open space for more democracy, I urge a continuation of the critical perspective. Digital archives still are controlled, designed, and interpreted by humans, thus conveying all their preferences and prejudices. For example, issues of silencing race and gender that have been found in traditional archives are also mirrored in digital archives thanks to uneven forms of technological access.

This is especially true at the onset of these particular archives. One issue at the time of my data gathering was dealing with the lack of specific tagging or demographic information of the contributor. While minority voices may have been present, the absence of fine tagging tools made it difficult to hear them through the mass of submissions. Fortunately, during the time of this project, both databases worked towards improving the richness of data collected. This led to the development of minority specific exhibits; however, the submissions analyzed in this project were gathered before these exhibits were curated, suggesting a pathway for future research steps yet to come.

The digital archives examined most closely in this project focus are A Journal of the Plague Year (JOTPY) and the Coronavirus Confessions. The JOTPY is housed at Arizona State

and was created by Mark Tebeau, Chatherine O'Donnell, and Richard Amesbury. The archive includes texts and digital objects that “describes the pandemic and speaks to paradoxes of the moment” (JOTPY). For those submitting stories, it is a pivotal example of digital pre-emptive memory, with direct understanding that “historians will be able to use this record of daily life to better understand the changing nature of our lives.” While this potentially makes the initial submitters academic related, the site itself includes multiple other collections that pertain to local communities. These local databases increase the diversity of submitter and provides opportunities for a generalized view of daily life.

The Coronavirus Confessions are private confessions submitted to a website to become public. The confessions come from real people sharing their stories with society. The confessions I examined most closely are hosted by NBC. An archive shaped or even simply hosted by a news organization might be understood as creating a distorted sample, likely to solicit confessions from particular demographics or subcultural groupings; according to Pew research NBC News is one of three most trusted outlets, yet it still is perceived as slightly left leaning. The possibility arises that conservative voices may not be equally represented. When looking at political issues within the confessions, of course, it is important to remember what voices are not represented due to the institutional owner of the archives.

Less than a year into the pandemic more than 3000 confessions had been uploaded and categorized into six tags: childcare, dating, family and friends, schools, supplies, and work. As the database continued to grow, numerous other tags were created, and a few were nestled under others, to represent different themes presented in the confessions. For example, #indoorevents involved confessions that described life inside, “the six-foot rule is hygiene theater.” Each of these categories touches on parts of life that have been changed by COVID-19. As an example of

COVID's impact on one of these categories, Williams, Miller, and Marques-Velarde (2021) discussed four frames for individuals dealing with the risks of dating during COVID-19. The four frames they came up with are: "1) unconcerned about risk, 2) preliminary risk assessment, 3) active risk negotiation, and 4) risk aversion" (p. 1). While pertaining to dating, these frames bring awareness to the decision making during COVID. In the stories shared in the digital archives, people address their risk negotiation; whether overt, "we wash our groceries before bringing them inside," or covert, "I get to stay home with my kids." Both examples demonstrate how these stories and archives are a rich source of data to help us understand people's COVID-19 realities.

1.5 The Method

Houlden, Hodson, Veletsianos, Thompson and Reid (2021) explored how individuals were engaging with COVID-19 information online. "Developing a more nuanced picture of the way people engage with COVID-19 information online, interventions can work better with people's motivations and concerns and perhaps be more effective" (p. 2). In their method, they interviewed 18 participants on the factors that influenced engagement with COVID-19 information. They concluded, "engagement with [COVID-19] content is complex and needs to account for the interacting influences at the levels of the individual, community, organizations and the border information environment, and how these influences change over time" (p. 18). This study used a rhetorical multimodal approach to understand how people are engaging with and making sense of the pandemic.

As one example of a rhetorical approach to study pandemics, Angeli (2012) examined metaphors found in media headlines of H1N1 and swine flu. She argued that "themes work toward providing a rhetoric of pandemic flu, a rhetoric that might assist health care recipients in

being more aware of how metaphors used in electronic media create meaning for health concerns” (p. 203). Angeli’s metaphor themes of fear, natural disaster, and war provided a starting cluster of terms to look for in future pandemic discourse. While the study is a metaphor analysis, it demonstrated the viability of a discourse based analysis to study pandemics.

1.5.1 Discourse Analysis

I used discourse analysis to study COVID-19 digital archives and confessions as memory of an ongoing pandemic. Discourse analysis incorporates different tools to examine language in social context. This helps us understand how people make meaning out of different social events. Fairclough (2003) explained, “language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, so that social analysis and research always has to take account of language” (p. 2). Studying the language people use within a given context, provides insight into how they make sense of that given event. The limitations of the social event and time works interconnectivity with the text to establish meaning. These affordances and limitations provide a unique insight for memory studies. Rather than studying what is said about an event outside of the given social context of that event, discourse analysis connects time, place¹, and language. This “real” time feedback provides a more nuanced approach to understand memory. Memory is not just a static past but evolving and changing. Today’s memory of COVID-19 will be different than tomorrow’s memory.

Researchers have applied discourse analysis on different types of texts including, but not limited to, government records, policy papers, narratives, confessions, testimonies, digital communication, oral storytelling, and news coverage (Erjavec and Erjavec, 2015; Herring and

¹ Place in all forms- physical, digital, and mental

Androutsopoulos, 2015; Zheng and Tandoc, 2020). These studies answered questions concerning how organizations or individuals defined, discussed, or presented a situation.

1.5.1.1 Discourse analysis and health

Discourse analysis also has a rich history with studying health topics. Jones (2015) listed areas where discourse analysis was used to study “health communication, including physician-patient interaction, the discourse of health promotion texts, the construction of health and risk in the media, and the discursive negotiation of health and risk in everyday life” (p. 841). Common discursive studies focused on doctor-patient conversations, health records, and other occurrences in professional settings (Adolphs, Atkins, Harvey, 2007; Bülow, 2004; Candlin and Candlin, 2010; Iedema and Scheeres, 2003; Maynard, 2004). Outside of the office, studies have found discussions held in everyday life had a significant impact on health behavior (Beach, 2008; Cheshire and Ziebland, 2005; Garro, 1994; Rhodes, 1997). Jones’ explained “more recently, discourse analysts are turning their attention to the ways health and risk communication is increasingly being mediated through technologies” (p. 843). Serving as an example, Pearce, Trumble, Arnold, Dwan, and Phillips (2008) studied how digital consultation’s impacted patient-doctor relationships. In everyday life, Nettleton, Burrows, and O’Malley (2005) examined people’s use of online health resources. While the COVID-19 archives are not health discussion boards, they do provide insight into the impact of a major health event on numerous areas outside of health. Often when people are discussing health issues, other topics and emotions are involved. During a health pandemic, the social becomes interwoven with health inferences. A narrative of a birthday party with no mention of health items, exhibits the narrator's perception of health risk. Using discourse analysis to study COVID-19 texts falls in line with how people negotiate the risk of contracting COVID-19 and other complications.

1.5.1.2 Computer mediated discourse

Computer mediated discourse (CMD) started to take off after Ferrara, Brunner, and Whitemore (1991) argued CMD's should be seen as a register of language that includes characteristics of both written and spoken language. Herring and Androutsopoulos (2015) defined CMD as "the communication produced when human beings interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked or mobile computers, where 'computers' are defined broadly to include any digital communication device" (p. 127). In short, communication is created through digital means. Some prior studies have looked at quoting in computer-mediated dialogues (Eklundh, 2010), personal sharing online (Androutsopoulos, 2014), and online communities (Herring, 2004).

While there are multiple areas of discourse analysis research, this study is interested in connecting meaning and memory. I used a multimodal approach, starting with a corpus-based analysis, followed by a meaning analysis. For the meaning analysis, I looked at six main features when analyzing artifacts: words, utterances, emoticons, genre (or break from genre), performativity, and intertextuality.

Looking at word choice, frequency, and distribution provides insight into the topic, attitudes, and emotional range of the author. Next, I looked at each utterance that supported the author's goals. Herring and Androutsopoulos (2015) defined utterance "as a sequence of one or more words that preceded and followed by silence (space) or a change in communicator" (p. 131). They are the building blocks of CMD, similar to traditional sentences without the need for formal punctuation. If present, emoticons were analyzed as nonverbal communication, whereas a specific emoticon can flip a meaning of the message [e.g. That's sick :)]. In CMD, the researcher must take the account as bona fide. With the additional emoticon, the meaning can be read as

non-bona fide. In the example, ‘that’s sick’ no longer pertains to the actual act of feeling unwell, but is a phrase equivalent to ‘that’s awesome.’

In examining genre, typical conventions are based on Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, and Wright (2004) genre analysis of weblogs along with Herring’s (2007) study of personal journal blogs. In particular, I looked for breaks in the convention. While all of the archives have personal journaling characteristics, each one has unique affordances. Artifacts in the JOTPY were classified as general blog style, and incorporated more diverse characteristics. Finally, the Coronavirus Confessions were classified as a technological genre of twitter with the traditional format of confessions. This was due to their limited text and their ‘private’ format.

Performancitivity, as demonstrated by Virtanen (2013), illustrates the author in action. These texts create a dynamic character, whether through use of abbreviations (lol, rofl) or through play acting. The final feature, intertextuality, includes references to outside sources or context. This involves quotes or mentions from authorities or media. In numerous stories, the author’s mention the White House or Dr. Fauci. These references, whether direct quote or indirect, provide meaning to their messages.

Herring and Androutsopoulos suggested a “CMD study can reveal interconnections between micro- and macro-levels of interaction, and potentially lead language scholars to forge more comprehensive theories of discourse and social action as a result” (p. 143). The Journal of the Plague Year and the Coronavirus Confessions are all CMD’s. The initial archivist puts forth a digital call, the creators write up a digital story/confession, and the viewer interacts through a digital medium. Understanding these artifacts as CMD’s helps to establish the context of the text itself. CMD’s are notably complex and change based on the format of the discourse itself. When conducting a discourse analysis on mediated text, it is important to ask how the format itself

impacts the discourse. Using forms of discourse analysis on these computer mediated archives adds an additional avenue of memory studies.

Discourse analysis allows for a view of archives and confessions as testimony. Byford (2013) explained “a discursive approach to testimony. . .views the act of remembering, its capture on tape or film and subsequent dissemination and consumption, as a set of dynamic, interacting social practices. This approach moves beyond notions of accuracy and authenticity, and considers both of these as pragmatic concerns that survivors of the Holocaust attend to as they construct socially and interactionally relevant stories of their past” (p. 213-214). Furthermore, Byford argued “that as well as exploring the rhetorical structure and function of survivors’ accounts, discourse-based analysis must encompass a detailed exploration of the broader cultural and ideological context within which a specific act of bearing witness is embedded, which establishes ‘the survivor’ as a source of epistemic and moral authority” (p. 214). Discourse analysis allows the researcher to combine the text with the environment that created the conditions for the text. In this particular case, it combines the actual words with the digital format and the ongoing pandemic.

1.5.2 Diction

For the initial stage of a corpus-based approach, I used a computer aided textual analysis software, Diction, to assist in analyzing large sets of data. Diction is a computer software created by Hart and Carroll to detect tonal variation in text. It comes with five built in master variables that are comprised of different dictionaries.

Table 1.1 Five Master Variables from Hart and Carroll (2013)

Five ‘Master Variables’ are built by concatenating these 31 dictionary scores.	Definition	Formula²
Certainty	Language indicating resoluteness, inflexibility, and completeness and a tendency to speak ex cathedra	[Tenacity + Leveling + Collectives + Insistence] – [Numerical Terms + Ambivalence + Self Reference + Variety]
Optimism	Language endorsing some person, group, concept or event or highlighting their positive entailments.	[Praise + Satisfaction + Inspiration] – [Blame + Hardship + Denial]
Activity	Language featuring movement, change, the implementation of ideas and the avoidance of inertia.	[Aggression + Accomplishment + Communication + Motion] – [Cognition + Passivity + Embellishment]
Realism	Language describing tangible, immediate, recognizable matters that affect people’s everyday lives.	[Familiarity + Spatial Terms + Temporal Terms + Present Concern + Human Interest + Concreteness] – [Past Concern + Complexity]
Commonality	Language highlighting the agreed -upon values of a group and rejecting idiosyncratic modes of engagement.	[Centrality + Cooperation + Rapport] – [Diversity + Exclusion + Liberation]

Hart (2020) demonstrated the connection between a discursive analysis and Diction using Trump as an example. He explained that Trump used storytelling as a tactic to win the 2016 election. Diction can provide a measure of narrative force and “prior studies have shown that DICTION’s operationalization of Narrative Force cleanly separates novels and short stories from

² For a complete definition of all formula terms see Hart and Carroll (2013) pp. 6-10.

corporate reports, biographies from scientific documents, theatrical productions from scholarly prose” (p. 99). The ability of Diction to pick up on tones allows the software to assist narrative analysis. Trump’s “high insistence scores (a measure of thematic repetition) showed that he continually reinforces the same stories,” a key element in narrative rationality (p. 99).

Furthermore, “when combined with an unprecedented use of exaggeration (words like colossal, extraordinary, fabulous, huge, etc.), Trump’s statements become overstatements and his little stories become grand narratives” (p. 100). Hart showed the importance of looking at tone when understanding the power of narrative. While Trump had weak storytelling elements, his tone connected with his audience and his narrative world view connected with people. Diction allows the researcher to examine texts to supplement human analysis.

Diction helps to navigate the large databases, while discourse analysis provides a framework for deeper study. While each chapter has a variation of discourse analysis, the overall framework of the method was the same. The broadness of discourse analysis allowed opportunities to address different areas of memory studies. Chapter 2 looked at displays of affect and included a sentiment analysis. It focused on memories’ connection to emotion. Chapter 3 looked at performances of policy, examining how the legacy of sanitation policy or quarantine policy was enacted during COVID-19. This chapter examined the connection between memory and time, or how past memories play a role in establishing new policies and memories. Chapter 4 examined identity and the impact of normalcy on group formation. Discussions of identity go along with memories role in identity formation. Chapter 5 looked at partisanship, in particular partisan words or ideological heavy words extended from the previous chapter. Studying partisan discourse demonstrated a partial and contested memory, and revealed new forms of silencing.

While these frames are separated into chapters, memories flow through and are entangled. Rather than think of these categories as concrete, they should be viewed as porous. A single memory performance can exist simultaneously in multiple frames. Each frame provides a different angle to view the memory.

This dissertation argues the importance of understanding memory as it is made through an elongated pandemic. Studying the memories from the beginning of the pandemic gives us insight into what people value, notice, respond to, etc... Perhaps, it may even provide a glimpse into the best way to communicate around a pandemic. Rather than just seeing the end result, we get a chance to view the journey and learn how memory is performed during a major pandemic. As part of the process of trauma recovery, an individual tells a story of the trauma, whether abstract, through pictures, or detail oriented. Sharing that memory allows that person to own that story, it gives them a sense of power that often trauma takes away. By sharing their memories, the COVID-19 archives provide a place for people to take some power back. What is interesting is the power struggle between these memories and a pandemic that lasts over a year. Shulman, Bullock, and Riggs (2021) “suggested that motivation to process COVID-19 related information declined over time” (p. 1). COVID-19 has produced burnout and has been labeled an “infodemic.”

Studying the stories shared at the beginning in the context of an ongoing pandemic provides a rude awakening. The novelty of the virus caused schools to close and people to take extra precaution. And it worked to a certain degree. Yet, a year in and cases rose, hospitals were filled, and schools were back in person. While the threat of the virus remained, the novelty of the virus was gone and for some, so too the vigilant precautions. The memories created now are different than a year ago. And the memories of the future COVID-19 will be different than those

created today. Studying digitally performed pre-emptive memory during a pandemic helps to create a new framework for future memory studies. Using COVID-19 as the context, it also provides insight into how people make sense of the pandemic and what voices are being overshadowed. As a culture that believes in the right to be heard, ultimately, what is at stake is the basic human right of speech.

2 IT IS MORE THAN A FEELING

*And I feel like today's the day
I'm looking for the words to say
Do you wanna be free, are you ready for me
To feel this way?
I don't wanna lose ya*

- Tom Scholz

Emotions and moods have meaning beyond their surface. As Scholz so eloquently performed, feelings relate to deeper thoughts. Reflections on COVID-19 are laden with affect. One cannot ignore affect when studying memories of the pandemic. The memories in these databases showcase not only the negative connotations around health scares, but also the positive associations from unity in the aftermath. Often, memories are entangled and provide a glimpse of emotion as fleeting; one second negative, the next positive. A journey through COVID memories deals with investigating these entanglements and provides an understanding of what themes emotions are attributed with and how they are attached.

People attach feelings to things that matter. An impactful event is associated with a corresponding emotion. Looking at affect within the Coronavirus Confessions and the Journal of the Plague Year allows us to see what people consider important to share, and what mood it should be understood in. “Public memory embraces events, people, objects, and places that it deems worthy of preservation, based on some kind of emotional attachment” (Blair et al, p. 7). Research often discusses affect and memory in two manners: connected to a simple assumption or a trauma, both of which Blair et al explained have inadequacies:

The first, which amounts simply to assertion, invites but does not produce a serious, exploration. The second- and, at some level, more satisfying- articulation offers an in-depth examination of very particular kinds of responses to a very particular kind of event (p. 8).

To put it simply, to discuss affect and public memory one must go further than a simple inclusion; yet avoid sweeping claims from specific cases that yield no generalizability. The health crisis and trauma lens can provide an affective backdrop for COVID-19 memories.

2.1 Trauma

Trauma and memory have a long and entangled relationship. Connected to the literature in public memory, Keightly and Pickering (2013) argued “that, as a concept, trauma has been extensively misapplied in memory studies, and note its analytical limitations when exploring the remembering of painful pasts” (p. 165). They explained how trauma and painful remembering are unique and through careful analysis, researchers can distinguish how “some painful pasts can be used rhetorically or as sites for renewal in the present, whereas some remain disruptive to the processes of remembering” (p. 166). This understanding takes into account a society’s ability to process the trauma or painful event. After a trauma, society engages with the event, overtime creating a shared cultural memory. With digital technology, trauma memory may be created during the trauma. Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, and Reading (2009) suggested “in times of trauma, crisis, grief, and mourning, digital media can be seen to contribute to a ‘comfort culture’ giving immediate access to sites of memory, national identity, community and consumerism secured by purchasing a World Trade Center memento on ebay for example” (p. 6). This immediacy of confronting the trauma in digital culture radically changes the temporality of trauma in public culture. Reacting to the trauma of COVID-19 immediately opens avenues for digital mourning. The Coronavirus Confessions serve as an example of dealing with trauma in the present. Where trauma once was engaged with over a period of time, extending the presence of trauma if not the actual event, the digital allows people to engage immediately. The question for the future is

whether this simultaneous engagement with trauma will reduce its presence over the long term or create a fragmented memory.

There are different types of traumas. Important to this paper is the distinction between health trauma and collective trauma. Coronavirus is a health trauma, with personal threat and efficacy. Health trauma can be used to create collective trauma, but it is not collective by itself. As Alexander (2012) stated, “the cultural construction of collective trauma is fueled by individual experiences of pain and suffering, but it is the threat to collective rather than individual identity that define the suffering at stake” (p. 2). Alexander acknowledged the importance of individual suffering, but notes his work is with collective trauma that is connected with social identity. “The lives lost and pains experienced are individual facts; shared trauma depends on collective processes of cultural interpretation” (p. 3). Going from individual to collective trauma is a public process, requiring performances. “Collective traumas are reflections of neither individual suffering nor actual events, but symbolic renderings that reconstruct and imagine them. Rather than descriptions of what is, they are arguments about what must have been and what should be” (p. 4).

Viewing trauma stories as symbolic renderings or acts helps to analyze power differences within the narratives and the trauma process. “The spiral of signification is mediated by institutional structures and uneven distributions of wealth and power. Power and resources are critical, even if they alone will not decide” (p. 4). The limitations of the vernacular to create a local collective trauma are washed by power and media. Those with resources are more likely to have their narrative shared and their memory preserved. A pandemic can help perpetuate power differences. In discussing stories from the Spanish Flu, Spinney (2017) explained that the stories were “told by those who got off most lightly: the white and well off” (p. 292).

Emotion can also be used in competition for power. During the initial stages of COVID-19 there were competing government communications between the White House and Dr. Fauci. For example, when they were in the same press conferences they often contradicted each other's statements. This competition brings rhetoric into the field of trauma communication. In order to persuade the public, each side had to present their argument effectively through whatever means possible. Na, Garrett, and Slater (2018) explained that public health crises create an environment where rumors disrupt the receiving of correct information. "The congruence between one's emotional state and the emotion induced by a rumor leads people to believe the rumor" (p. 791). This demonstrates the importance of rhetoric when explaining health precautions. Charquero-Ballester, Walter, Nissan, and Bechmann (2021) also connected the emotional context around affective misinformation to its spread ability. One could use highly emotionally charged language to illicit the belief of their audience, regardless of fact. Noar and Austin (2020) explained these "mixed messages and contradictions have hampered the US response" (p. 1). Not knowing who to believe or what to do, the US was slow in taking precautions against COVID-19. Affect plays a large role in what people believe. Studying the affective language within each database provides a glimpse into perceptions of COVID-19.

Feldman (2021) found hope, fear/anxiety and posttraumatic stress helped to predict people's preparedness in the early stages of COVID-19. He defined hope as the interconnectedness of agency and pathways; where agency is the person's perceived ability to work towards their goals and pathways are the available routes or strategies. Extending the concept of hope, Singla, Mehta, and Mehta (2021) connected hope during the pandemic with spiritual transformation. They argued that spiritual transformation in light of COVID anxiety evolved into care and compassion for others. Here we see a transformation of emotion and the entangled

characteristic of affect in Coronavirus memory. While Singla et al. argued emotional transformations took place, it is important to see how affect is discursively represented in memory making databases.

On a negative sentiment, Feldeman's fear was associated with believed mortality risk that was uncovered by asking how worried they were about catching the virus and public panic and how much anxiety they experienced from fears of contracting the virus and from possible public panic. Feldman's study is concerned with public health information and demonstrates the usefulness of affect in future PSA's. It also reconfirms the mental health impact that Abdullah, Parveen, Khan, and Abdullah (2021) argued is a historical characteristic of pandemics and trauma.

Kubacka, Luczys, Modrzyk, and Stamm (2021) dove deeper into COVID-19 mental trauma and explored pandemic rage, "an emotional reaction to feelings of anger, frustration and helplessness resulting from the conviction that fundamental rules have been violated during a pandemic, which is perceived . . . as provocation, impertinence, insolence, and crossing boundaries" (p. 1). While we engage with pandemic rage related to COVID-19 we must mention Byung-Chul Han's work on rage in the digital age. Rage is not exclusive to COVID, but it is an important factor to understand how memory of COVID-19 is being performed discursively in a meditated format. In the digital age, rage is often associated with a fleeting status. Social media provides a platform that allows the user to rage within a timely limit and then move on. What is interesting is that archives are meant to catch and freeze a moment in time. Perhaps what makes pandemic rage unique is the longevity confirmed when people share their rage with the knowledge that it will be remembered. With its connection directly with the pandemic, Kubacka et al.'s definition, combined with Feldeman's definition of fear/anxiety

creates a tool for discourse analysis to separate negative sentiment into rage and fear. Kubacka et al. explained that individuals who experience pandemic rage often feel their space, both private and public, is becoming condensed or invaded by others. For example, restrictions on movement or quarantines caused some individuals to become enraged due to the reduced access to their public sphere.

Vemprala, Bhatt, Valecha and Rao (2021) extended the effect of health emotions to the economy, suggesting people's fear/anxiety and rage contributed to supply disruptions in the cases of panic buying. Through an analysis of social media data related to COVID-19, they studied the negative emotions when concerned with health and economic issues. They found fear most often associated with people's lives or livelihood and anger over economic issues such as losing jobs or economic restrictions. This anger falls into the category of pandemic rage. Vemprala et al demonstrated the importance of looking at emotions across different issues related to COVID-19. While their artifacts were Twitter based, it showcases the need to understand what emotions are connected with different COVID-19 issues. By studying the *Coronavirus Confessions* and the *Journal of the Plague Year*, this study explores these connections in databases intended to remember COVID-19.

2.2 Method

As part of the initial process to connect emotion to language, I ran a sentiment analysis on the artifacts. Studies have already demonstrated success with running sentiment analysis on COVID-19 material. Boon-Itt, and Skunkan (2020) sought to understand the trends associated with COVID-19 by connecting emotions, beliefs, and thoughts of the public. Based off their analysis of English tweets related to COVID-19, they found that overall people had a negative sentiment. Luu and Follmann (2022) had similar aims to share COVID-19 issues with the public

and help influence pandemic legislation. The importance of both works can be justified by Chakraborty et al.'s (2020) argument over the need to demystify twitter accuracy. They suggested that social media "is becoming instrumental in disseminating useless information" (p.2). Their goal was to inform the public of misinformation and misleading sentiment. They found that while positive sentiment existed on twitter, negative sentiment was more likely to be retweeted, thus leading to an increase perception of negative sentiment. Studying the sentiment of the Coronavirus Confessions and the Journal of the Plague Year can demonstrate what sentiment perceptions are and perhaps will be remembered.

Chandra and Krishna (2021) examined twitter sentiment in India and found a majority of optimistic tweets at the rise of the novel coronavirus that leveled off at the peak. This comparison to other studies that took place in other countries demonstrates the difference location makes when studying affect. It is a reminder that generalizations cannot be made globally, but studying a national database provides insight into how some remember the pandemic and that memory is cultural not universal.

Multiple studies have run sentiment analysis on COVID-19 related tweets; however, they have not been applied to the Coronavirus Confessions nor the Journal of the Plague Year. These databases offer different forms of mediated discourse and provide different glimpses on how affect is connected in confessional and intentional memory making.

I first used the extension "Instant Data Scraper" to gather details from the digital archives and saved them in spreadsheets. Next, I created a flow process through Parabola that included a sentiment analysis based off "Google's Natural Language Processing API" (Parabola, 2021). The sentiment analysis used artificial intelligence to go through text and provide an emotional score for each artifact. The AI provides a score based on associated positive, negative,

or neutral terms. Of note, it does not distinguish between different emotions within those categories, e.g. scared and angry terms are both associated with negative. The sentiment analysis was used on the entire Confession and the description in the Journal of the Plague Year. The table below shows the total number of artifacts analyzed for each archive.

Table 2.1 Artifacts Analyzed

Archive	Text Analyzed (Number of submissions)
Coronavirus Confessions	3081
Journal of the Plague Year	873

After running the sentiment analysis in Parabola, I established labels for each score as neutral, negative, or positive based on the following: Negative < -1, Positive > 1, and Neutral anything between. These numbers were established based off different example sentiment analysis tutorials and also used in prior sentiment analyses run on COVID-19 tweets (Xia and Chen, 2021; Zhang, Yi, Chen, and He, 2021). The table below shows the overall sentiments for each Archive.

Table 2.2 Artifact Sentiments

Archive	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Coronavirus Confessions	2027 (66%)	345 (11%)	709 (23%)
Journal of the Plague Year	376 (43%)	263 (30%)	234 (27%)

Individually there were a few articles mislabeled by the AI; however, overall, the sentiment analysis provided an overview that was used to select a sample of articles for a deeper discourse analysis guided by: What health traumas are present? What is the overall collective trauma? What issues are connected with negative sentiments? How is pandemic rage and fear/anxiety performed? What issues are connected with positive sentiments? How is hope performed?

In addition, for the JOTPY, I used the date of memory provided by the submitter to look for any contextual triggers related to sentiment. Negative sentiment increases submissions in March, end of April/beginning of May, beginning of September and in December. Positive sentiment spiked in March, the middle of May and in December. Finally, Neutral spiked in March, April and December.

2.3 Analysis

Recalling Chakraborty et al.'s argument about the misleading retweeting of negative tweets, whether or not retweeting of negative tweets frames the remembrance of COVID-19 or if public perception was ultimately negative, both lead to a memory of covid-19 that is overall negative. Memory is performed in the present, thus the actual sentiment at the time may not be what is recorded and shared when reflecting on the event.

One explanation to the differences found in Chakraborty et al.'s twitter analysis and the two archives can be informed by the types of databases. The Coronavirus Confessions represents an anonymous forum to express reactions or confessions of actions brought on by COVID. While what people share lasts, they are covered by the cloak of anonymity, thus allowing space for digital rage alongside confessions of fear and anxiety. When looking at the Coronavirus Confessions' master variables from DICTION (provided in Appendix A), it is unsurprising that

the level of optimism (o) is significantly lower for negative sentiment (o=39.26) compared to neutral (o=45.27) or more positive accounts (o=53.28). While this is expected, it demonstrated the consistency of DICTION and allows for an acceptance of the reliability of other significant variables. Of particular interest, for example, is the amount of certainty (c) attributed in the negative sentiments (c=270.93) compared to the neutral (c=85.68) or positive (c=118.35). While all levels are higher than typical data, the almost doubled score of negative sentiment showcased a higher level of inflexibility or view of concreteness. This works for both the indices of rage and fear. Those who are enraged see themselves as resolute and completely offended. Think Mr. Rabbit from Winnie the Pooh, angry and certain that others are destroying his peace. On the other hand, those in fear are certain that things are bad. I picture this last group as Eeyore-esque, solemnly moping and accepting the world as inflexible.

Numerous Coronavirus Confessions were shared by teachers upset over the state of education. Some were angry at administration for their lack of support. For example, "Hate distance learning. Don't get enough support in lesson planning." "Administration and Board are more concerned with sports continuing than staff safety." Others were angry at parents for treating them as babysitters, "No win situation. Remote teaching is awful. Returning to school may be a death sentence. Either way, teachers will be vilified." "Why isn't anyone scared for teachers? Do we really matter so little that we don't have choice? It's beyond frustrating." While some were fearful for their lives "I'm scared to death. Those in authority don't seem to care. Why?!" "Kids and adults will get sick. Admin needs to stop lying that we are safe!" As a collective group, they demonstrated pandemic rage.

COVID-19 changed education and challenged the fundamental assumptions that most teachers held. Increased workloads, lack of time, and a sense of community disrespect

culminated in an emotional plea for help. Teacher's confessions demonstrated a pandemic that has created more space for rage. While they are being recorded and shared on a public site, they sadly share the fate of most confessions and are only heard by a few. The use of the confessions by teachers may demonstrate a larger issue. They may fear their concerns and rage would be retaliated against, and thus the only way to express themselves is to do so anonymously. Perhaps the issue exposed by COVID-19 can lead to positive fundamental changes to educational communication. Memories emotional attachments are a necessary characteristic to enact future change. Without the remembering of teacher rage, the system will not be fixed. The long-term emotional relationship adds power to the memory and demonstrates the affective valence of the memory.

Other negative confessions were focused on people who were not doing their part to prevent disease spread or reduce impact of supply chain shortages. People's normal lives were altered, and they took their anger out on those not following recommendations. One example responds to mask wearing in Pennsylvania. "People are acting like the virus is gone. NO ONE is wearing masks. Restaurant servers not even wearing mask. So angry!" Another example brings up supply issues. "I am ashamed of how people are acting. I didn't realize how selfish people really were. It saddens me." Both examples demonstrate negative sentiment aimed at human characteristics brought out by the pandemic. As one confessor states, "I've unfollowed several friends, they think it's a hoax or a joke. They are morons and I have no respect for them. It's gross." The pandemic rage in these confessions is not about COVID, but about the broken illusion of human characteristics.

With numerous emotions clustered under the very broad negative label, it is important to go deeper into how negative sentiment is performed through the compilations of emotions.

Emotion can be a predictor of how likely someone is to believe pandemic rumors (Na, Garrett, and Slater, 2018). Rumors that appear relevant and share the same emotional connotation that the listener feels will more likely be perceived as true. If we can examine how different emotions are performed and then compare them to different rumors or conspiracies, we can help those susceptible to fake information. Fear and anger are displayed differently throughout the confessions. While in some examples they coexist, when they are parsed out the structure of anger and pandemic rage demonstrates short, choppy statements strung together. In the three examples in the paragraph above, they all end with a short statement, “So angry!” “It saddens me” “It’s gross.” It is as if the confessor is rattled up and starts spewing, then realizes where they are and ends with a summation.

Looking at confessions of fear, a key structural similarity is articulation of the unknown. We fear what we do not know. For those asking questions out of fear, it’s about not having control. One confession asked, “how can I get parents to take it seriously?” demonstrating a teacher’s fear about contracting the virus from student’s who follow their parents lead in not following mitigation efforts. While the use of questions is not exclusive to fear; it does shine a light on the unknown. Another confession demonstrated fear by sharing “I worry about my disabled 32 yr old son I take care. Terrified of bringing it home to him. I don’t think others understand this worry.” While there is not a question attached, what the confessor is wondering is what will happen to the son. Unlike the confessions of rage, which demonstrated a sense of confidence, confessions of fear admitted the unknown.

Contrasting to the anonymous characteristic of confessions, the Journal of the Plague Year is unashamedly archival memory. The nature of the site is set up to remind the sharer that what they write will be archived and shared. When compared to the nature of confessions, this

reminder promotes more thought to what is digitally performed. The negative sentiments overall are reflections or analysis of issues related to COVID-19. The overall message throughout the JOTPY negative sentiments is life changed. The specific changes featured in the negative sentiments were related to restrictions, health trauma, and pandemic rage.

With hospitals facing overcrowding, restrictions were put into place to mitigate spread. These restrictions limited people's choices and forced them to wait for other to make a decision about their lives. Some in the JOTPY saw this precarious situation as hopeless. "There seems to be no plan for the future, only empty political hype"- we are helpless and those elected to do something are not helping. The politicizing of the pandemic is reiterated by an JOTPY analysis of a stimulus letter 'signed' by the president, "the president angered many within the US, as they viewed this as a politically-motivated stunt." These actions are seen as those who can enact change are playing a game rather than solving the problem. In some places, the restrictions put into place hampered their livelihood. One story from Coachella Valley shared how without tourism the area is devastated.

On the topic of health trauma, one JOTPY article described their COVID symptoms. *COVID Smells* described the author's experience smelling ammonia. "When everyone can smell the same smell, it's one thing but when only you can smell it you begin to question your sanity." While the author's smell symptoms only lasted one day, it demonstrated a feeling of isolation those with COVID faced. Although they may be isolated in facing their health symptoms, the fear of contracting those symptoms created a psychological response to health trauma for those who did not get sick. One author described their day of running necessary errands with all the mitigation efforts they took. Even with being cautious, the author on numerous occasions mentioned hesitation or regret on their choices "misgivings about heading into an enormous

shopping center,” “feeling more and more like an avoidable error,” “I realize then we should have self-scanned all this crap. Now the checkout person is going to touch all our stuff, breath on it and so forth.” After going into detail about their time at the shopping center, they simply end “We head out to the car, sanitize, and home. Social interactions? Two.” Their reflection on their experience demonstrated a thought-out response to a global pandemic that is representative of most JOTPY artifacts.

This is not to say that pandemic rage does not exist in the JOTPY, but often it takes a similar format to other negative sentiment. Rage was attributed to a lack of control or perceived bias and then led the individuals to analyze the situation. For example, a young driver pulled over for driving past curfew questioned how certain rules and laws are more heavily carried out. “I learned to not break COVID rules since those are the ones the government actually cares about.” Another young person in the JOTPY upset over the expectations put on them by parents asked if there is compassion when living within a pandemic, “I can’t believe they expect me to constantly be in a productive state during the worst year of my life.” When compared to the rage of the teachers in the Coronavirus Confessions, these rage moments are temporal and lead to analyzing larger issues. They are issues brought up from COVID, not necessarily underlying issues exposed by the pandemic. The structure of rage in the JOTPY is less distinctive than in the confessions. This is perhaps due to the analytical nature of the database, or the complexity of the submissions. The confessions are short, targeted bursts, while the JOTPY allows room to demonstrate a range of emotions all within a single submission.

There are also positive and neutral associations in each database. Again, showcasing the difference in type of archive, the Coronavirus Confessions had more positive associations (23%) than neutral (11%), while the JOTPY was balanced (27% positive, 30% neutral). Positive

confessions focused on being able to work from home and spending time with family. One example in the Coronavirus Confessions reveled in the amount of time saved working from home, “No commute, fewer meetings, fewer interruptions. More productivity. Less stress.” Another combined working from home and spending time with family, “Best work environment ever! Being able to take care of my son and house has become easy.” While still measured as a positive, some confessions discussed how nice it was that some people left before the pandemic and they are not stuck at home with them, “My husband got on a train to Florida 10 days ago without saying a word about leaving. I couldn’t be happier. Peace bro.”

Positive labeled stories in the JOTPY demonstrated resilience and overcoming. There was negative, but that negative was used to see the positive. This reiterates the theme of change from the negative. In the *Fear of the Unknown*, the writer shared “the current situation has encouraged everyone to be on the lookout for anyone who needs help. People have become more sympathetic and I envision the same of the post-coronavirus world.” Unlike the negative, where human character was connected to neglect and selfishness, this writer saw glimpses of hope and was encouraged about the future. Another story discussed how outside, urban beauty helped people stay positive, “the backdrop beauty of the city is appreciated in these difficult times and keep(s) its inhabitants- including myself- resilient.” While the initial statement is made of the city, overcoming the negative is done by the people. Encouraged by beauty, people display hope and positivity.

In some cases, we see a small, simplified statement about watching TV or movies as a sign of resistance and normalcy. While the pandemic has caused a disruption to daily life, one story provided a memory of the pandemic that connected with a known task. Rather than seeing

everything as unknown or unfamiliar, the creator offered his COVID story as doing more of something normal and mundane.

In neutral sentiments, rather than the learning from COVID, the negative and positive often were linked. One JOTPY story explained they were happy but then bored. One Coronavirus Confession is thankful for family safety, but also is scared that what is keeping her safe might be her downfall, “My 82-year-old mother is thankfully safe. But boredom and loneliness might kill her. Makes me very sad for her.” Other neutral confessions appear to be a place for people to share what is on their mind; “Gun shops and liquor stores are not essential! Mad at people who won’t stay home. I love my wife of 36 years more than ever.” The confessions serve as a place for people to share their thoughts. The memory of COVID-19 touches multiple areas. Even in a limited amount of space, this last example demonstrated the overwhelming nature of a pandemic.

The JOTPY continues the trend of having deeper analyses. Fourteen-year-old Adolene Fowler provided her take on the coronavirus by sharing details about her life over six days. Her story involved some positives, and negatives that reflected on people’s reaction to the virus. At the end she emphasized a point made by celebrities, “not to joke all the time about a serious disease.” This seems to connect with another story of a liqueur retailer employee who noticed customers “trying to joke around to keep the mood light.” He even remembers “one customer who used a jock strap as a face mask.”

Of particular interest to a study of COVID memory, one JOTPY story discussed not seeing family. While the introduction was negative, explaining the attempts to see family across the border failed due to COVID policy aimed to mitigate health consequences, the bulk of the story recollected past Christmas traditions. “When we go up to see my family at Christmas time

it normally starts off as the first few days are catching up with each other. I love to tell them my stories and they all love to hear them.” This memory increased the presence of positive sentiment leading the API to note the story as neutral. From the interest of memory studies, while COVID is taking away the opportunity to form new memories around cherished traditions, it has created room for individuals to reflect and share past holidays.

The time specific event of holidays may spark initial negative sentiment, but the reflection of past positives helps to neutralize the memory performance. It seems the end of the year and missed holidays increased the amount of reflection across sentiment. Looking at other contextual markers, the initial creation of JOTPY combined with the first shut down helped to produce a spike in submissions across the month of March. Higher levels of neutral responses continued into April as people grappled with the novelty of the virus. With deaths still rising in April, peaking at over 2,500 new deaths in the middle of April, the latter half of April and the beginning of May saw negative submissions spike again. The quick drop of average daily deaths from 2500 to 800 along with the beginning of summer created a space for new positive sentiments starting in the middle of May. This also could reflect the promising studies from the NIH in the end of April that found treating patients with Remdesivir helped to reduce recovery time by 31%. While the average daily deaths at the end of summer remained lower than April, the return of schools in August and September increased the presence of negative sentiments. Interestingly, while most of these trends mirror COVID-19 statistics or scheduled events, they lack responses to other emerging contextual issues. For example, after the May 25th murder of George Floyd, submissions remained consistent. The archives may be focused on COVID-19, but the entire context of 2020 is important to acknowledge. This omission demonstrates an initial step into what is overshadowed in these digital archives.

It is interesting to note that the JOTPY articles, regardless of sentiment scored higher in realism (JOTPY $r=51.6$, CC $r=49.6$). As defined by Hart and Carroll, this means the language reflects “tangible, immediate, recognizable matters that affect people’s everyday lives.” The JOTPY is intended to archive daily life. When a new context challenges the assumptions of what is immediate, it often becomes overlooked or pushed aside. This especially occurs when the context is not directly impacting one’s daily life. The absence of a large set of data focused on George Floyd or BLM shines a light on who is submitting. For the most part it is not the minority who are fighting racial injustices, but those who have the privilege to reflect on what daily life is like during a pandemic.

2.4 Takeaways

Memory is entangled and is affectively composed of multiple sentiments. This pertains to a collective memory and to individually performed memory. Even in some of the negative examples there are glimpses of positive emotions. Similar, in the examples of positive sentiment, there are negative associations. When using sentiment, it is important to remember the work as a whole, or the aggregate total of expressed emotions.

While the majority of memory performances were negative, diving deeper into the sub emotions reveals the makeup of COVID-19 negative sentiments varies based on rage or fear. Understanding the differences in how these two negative sentiments are performed allows for a better understanding of how people view the pandemic and who is susceptible to rumors. On the side of solving COVID-19 problems of misinformation, we can use these differences in syntax to help evaluate and move people towards credible mitigation measures. Picking up the short outbursts of rage and looking for the final pronunciation, we can construct an argument that

directs the rage into positive motion. This also helps us understand why certain people are attracted to particular rumors and conspiracy theories.

Not surprisingly, health traumas are overwhelmingly connected with negative sentiment. In some examples COVID symptoms were self-described; however, the more emotional examples involved describing the symptoms of a loved one. While it shows that individual health trauma impacts close family members, present health issues are not necessarily the collective trauma. Instead it is the threat or fear of potential health symptoms that seems to be a driving force in people's actions. With over 6 million deaths globally connected to COVID-19, the collective memory is of the fear and anxiety of contracting the virus. Perhaps this is due to the majority of people sharing their stories had not contracted the virus before they shared. Social Media has shown the health symptoms and with heavy news coverage, the health issues (true or false) are hard to ignore. This helps to create hyper awareness that leads to the collective fear and anxiety that some scholars have labeled an "infodemic." The long-term health impact of those who contracted COVID-19 is unknown. For the collective, the psychological trauma will remain a memory entangled in the story of COVID-19.

As literature on trauma recovery demonstrated, overcoming trauma requires hope. Trauma takes away the perception of choice, leaving the victim powerless. The stories labeled as positive demonstrate overcoming and perseverance. They are the embodiment of hope through trying times. Seeing hope becomes an intentional choice. As demonstrated in the JOTPY, the positive comes after the negative; it is a response to the fear and anxiety and a decision to learn and grow. The mom who starts a blog on how to entertain kids, the community creating a garden, the family creating new traditions are heroes. The memory of COVID-19 is not just the negative, but, similar to past traumas, there are moments of everyday people stepping up to provide hope.

One key theme across all sentiments, is technology. Whether from zoom calls, to turning on a movie or escaping from technology into the outdoors, technology is heavily connected within COVID memories. From both negative and positive associations, people have weaved a story of technology throughout the pandemic. Technology has been remembered as a reaction to problems of the pandemic; the positive use to connect with friends, or the failed recording sent off for a grade during virtual school. It also has taken center stage as some people shared how the pandemic has positively disrupted our indoor tech lives and allowed us more time to get outdoors. Going through more characteristics of memory will create a more nuanced picture of the relationship between technology, COVID-19, and collective memory.

Outside of the connection to technology we learn two main themes from these emotions. First, while a sentiment analysis breaks down large data into categories, it is still important to distinguish among various forms of emotional utterances that combine to express complex emotional states. Performed emotions showcase how individuals see their pandemic lives. By understanding the qualities of rage against fear, structures of feeling are revealed that can help supplant false arguments. Second, increased participation in the submission of stories mirrors COVID-19 specific trends along with concrete annual trends, i.e. start of summer, beginning of a new school year, and holidays. These archives do not have a large response to contexts outside of COVID. While there are a few articles that touch on inequalities and Black Lives Matter, these archives are not the initial place to create a memory for these events. With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge the silencing of black and minority bodies within these COVID specific archives.

3 PANDEMIC FORESHADOWING/LONG TIME

*Well, I'm takin' my time, I'm just movin' on
You'll forget about me after I've been gone*
-Tom Scholz

Scholz's lyrics demonstrates our memory of pandemics. During, they are long and arduous, but, as demonstrated by the majority of society, forgotten long after they are gone. While COVID-19 has brought up comparisons of the Spanish Flu in news stories and academia, the overwhelming majority of pandemics are mute. Except in rare enclaves, Hong Kong Flu, Avian Flu, Swine Flu are cliff notes in our memories. It is not until repeated conditions arise that we recall the past. The rise of COVID-19 popularized the Spanish Flu and now with a new strand of Avian Flu on the rise during March 2022, it may be that the past Avian Flu will begin to show up again in news articles and academic literature. Unless another threat overshadows and, once again, pushes the past to the background.

Forgetting until a present stimulus recalls a former societal experience fulfills an assumption on memory. Memory is connected to the past, serving as the intermediary between the past and the present. Blair et al. described memory is activated by present conditions, "groups tell their pasts to themselves and others as ways of understanding, valorizing, justifying, excusing or subverting conditions or beliefs of their current moment" (p. 6). COVID-19 comes with its own baggage in the form of the Spanish Flu and other past pandemics. The assumption of the past used to construct the present is reiterated across the literature. As Morris and Ehrenhaus (1990) put it: "our memory of the past is what we make of it, or what we allow others to make of it for us. And if we acquiesce to a past produced by others, then perhaps we deserve the future it bears" (p. 228). There are choices to be made regarding how the past should be represented and there are debates on who gets to make those choices. These are rhetorical issues.

Blair et al.'s rhetorical response placed memory as rhetorical invention in the present: "we must acknowledge public memory to be 'invented,' not in the large sense of a fabrication, but in the more limited sense that public memories are constructed of rhetorical resources" (p. 13). The past offers choices that are then chosen for a particular purpose in the present. Prosis (1998) argued that "rhetorical critics and historians should more vigorously encourage the recognition that history is not fixed, objective, or true, but rather that it is an interpretive, inherently moralizing, and therefore constantly contestable, process" (p. 342). A rhetorical approach for memory studies, offers an analysis on who is providing the information and what they are bringing to the present.

Vinitzky-Seroussi and Maraschin (2021) argued, before COVID-19 "the Spanish Flu did not establish a major mnemonic presence" (p. 1481). Inspired by the renewed academic interest in pandemics, they examined past references of the Spanish Flu in news and popular culture. Over the years they found that while it was not forgotten, it only gained momentum during times of disease outbreaks. They labeled the rise of Spanish Flu remembrance during COVID-19 as "archival memory," a term popularized by Assmann. Archival memory refers to cultural memory that is stored and only recalled when an event induces similar qualities. COVID-19 shared multiple attributes with the Spanish Flu, leading to a renaissance of academic and medical articles remembering the past.

Petersen et al. (2020) provided a comparison of statistics between COVID-19 and past pandemics. They found "this new virus has a focal dissemination; therefore, some areas have a higher disease burden and are affected more than others" (p. 238). Knowing this they suggested implementing past measures that helped to reduced mortality rates in the past. They "believed that learning from this experience is crucial so that we can meet a future pandemic threat with far

better preparation” (p. 243). From a medical perspective, Javelle and Raoult (2021) reiterated the need to learn from past pandemics and in particular to learn how personal immune history can impact the severity of COVID-19. These examples show the importance of understanding the past for the present and future both in macro and micro environments.

Simonetti, Martini, and Armocida (2021) highlighted the similarities between COVID-19 and the Spanish Flu. Noticing the commonalities in the different waves of the Spanish Flu and COVID-19, they predicted a similar route for COVID-19 in reference to duration and mortalities. Socially, they noticed both pandemics were connected with myths and scapegoating. Some falsely claimed the Spanish Flu was a weapon of war created by Germany, while with COVID-19, some politicians label the disease as the “China Virus,” directing hatred towards Asian-Americans. The remembering of the Spanish Flu brings to light the question of what we have learned since our last pandemics. Society must demonstrate “its responsibilities and learn from present errors.” Robinson (2021) argued a similar point, “we need to place focus on the valuable lessons from the century’s two pandemics to prepare for future global disease outbreaks” (p. 350). Both these articles suggested that COVID-19 will not be the last pandemic. Our ability to learn from the Spanish Flu to help mitigate a pandemic from the start failed. Conducting research now on COVID-19 may help us learn and be prepared for the next pandemic. It is memory that helps us learn, traveling from the past, to the present, to the future.

Research on pandemics can also be found within popular culture. While pop culture encompasses a large amount resource, we will focus on how pandemics have shaped the popularity of certain books. Popular books written for a “lay audience” provides a unique addition to academic publishing. Seeing a list of pandemic related books on Amazon’s best sellers, demonstrates the pervasiveness of pandemic memory. With a human desire to gain

understanding of the current situation, multiple books have been published or have gained more attention during COVID-19. Michael Oldstone's (2010) *Viruses, Plagues, and History: Past, Present, and Future* examined the history of virology. Oldstone explained that virus and pandemic histories "would be incomplete without describing the politics and superstitions evoked by viruses and the diseases they cause" (p. 9). Pandemics are more than medical events; they trickle to all levels of society. Laura Spinney's (2017) *The Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How it Changed the World* examined the Spanish Flu "highlighting the profoundly social nature of a pandemic" (p. 7). While the Spanish flu infected a third of Earth's known population at the time, it had been overlooked in American society. This idea of national memory loss surrounding the Spanish Flu is supported by Alfred Crosby's (1989) *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*. Spinney suggested "the Spanish flu has been called the forgotten pandemic, but it isn't forgotten. Our collective memory of it is simply a work in progress" (p. 289). As demonstrated above, it is the elite and highly educated that are constructing and controlling the memory.

While not as often mentioned in COVID-19 memories, past pandemics and the responses to them are just as present during the Coronavirus pandemic. During the AIDS pandemic, origin narratives were created that circulated in both hegemonic and vernacular circles (Goldstein, 2004). Similar to conversations over the origin of COVID-19, these origin narratives of AIDS were central in establishing "cultural otherness, control, and distrust." The process of creating origin stories taps into the human need to understand. People want to know where and how the disease started. This opens opportunities for leaders to create narratives that provide an answer to the public while also serving as a vehicle to instill their own cultural views, assign blame, or deflect responsibility.

Krause (2006) suggested there is a “fog of epidemics,” or “the uncertainty that surrounds any response to a microbial outbreak” (p. 42). In poetic form, he compared this uncertainty to war:

The Fog of War: Uncertainty
Where is the enemy?
What is his strength?
What counterattack?

The Fog of Epidemics: Uncertainty
Where is the microbe?
How many; how virulent; how communicable?
What counterattack?

Perceived Miscalculations
1975 Swine flu outbreak
Response too rapid
1981 HIV/AIDS occurrence
Response too slow

Krause’s poem acknowledged the commonality between pandemics and war that others have directly linked to the Spanish Flu. His last stanza also highlights the continued specter of past pandemics in emerging pandemics. The responses from one false pandemic prediction resulted in an overcorrection for the next epidemic. The policies and reactions from all past pandemics, both perceived and real, live in the current pandemic. They may be changed, and some more present than others, but their spirit can be found throughout official and vernacular discourse; origin narratives, the debate over vaccinations, and talks comparing the 1918-19 pandemic.

While past research on pandemics included heavy mention of the 1918-19 pandemic, it also made connections to smaller outbreaks. But when looking at COVID-19, even with more data to choose from, the 1918-19 pandemic remained the gold standard of comparison. Perhaps the imbalanced focus on COVID-19 and the 1918-19 pandemic is due to the similarity in names, the centennial anniversary, or the similarities in pathing; however, the use of digital archives to

share memories of the ongoing COVID-19 event provided an opportunity to jump start our memory work. Interestingly, this current memory making of a pandemic is related to Spinney's explanation of war memory rather than pandemic memory. "Collective memories of war seem to be born instantly, fully formed. . . and then fade over time. Memories of cataclysmic pestilence build up more slowly, and once they have stabilized at some kind of equilibrium . . . they are, in general, more resistant to erosion" (p. 290). COVID-19 provided a unique case study in that there is instant memory making, yet the content area requires distance to understand. It is the public memory that is embellished on par with war memory, that then recedes to the academic memory. Spinney reminded the reader that "memory is an active process. Details have to be rehearsed to be retained, but who wants to rehearse details of a pandemic?" (p. 292). However, Spinney may have overlooked the power of sharing in trauma relief. These COVID-19 archives became the first step in a process of collective memory. As people cope with trauma, the sharing of their stories provided relief.

Spinney did get right that instant stories will have losers and victors, demonstrating a war like mentality. Already in academic writing war metaphors are being associated with COVID-19. Liang, Liang, and Rosen (2021) compared the Spanish Flu to COVID-19 in an attempt to understand how to defeat the virus. "It is difficult to predict how long this battle will continue but with synthetic biology in conjunction with social distancing, we should achieve victory" (p.274). The war analogy is also used by Ashton (2020) who combined a sports metaphor with war. "As we enter the fourth month of the UK leg of the Corona World Marathon, it is worth reminding ourselves of the battle rhythm of its closest relative and ancestor" (p. 197). The combination of sports and war metaphors have a close history. The movement of a health event to these combined metaphors brings with it the weight of past metaphors. If medical events become

associated with the ‘good fight,’ then our doctors and medical professionals may gain the celebrity status of heroes and victors fighting an enemy. If instant war stories are the trend, these digital archives are a piece of the COVID-19 war memory; while the pandemic memory will be pieced together over time. In studying the stories people have shared online, it will be important to distinguish if the story is about the virus or about the efforts related to ‘fight’ the virus.

Shah’s (2016) *Pandemic: Tracking Contagions, from Cholera to Ebola and Beyond* examined the journey of cholera in hopes of understanding the path of future epidemics. From her research into the past, she argued “we need to transcend the simplistic enemy-victor dichotomy and develop a new way of thinking about microbes and our role in the microbial world” (p. 209). As people talk about COVID-19, one area to look at is how they refer to the virus or the effort to slow the spread. Are they talking about the virus in terms of an enemy that needs to be conquered? Or is there a new way of discussing human interaction with viruses?

Direct connections to the Spanish Flu or other pandemics are far and few between in the Coronavirus Confessions. A search of Spanish Flu or 1918/1919 yielded no relevant results. Modifying the search to “plague” found one result that connected to the past, while three others used the term to refer to the current pandemic. The one confession with reference to the past, only mentioned that they existed and asked, “why does it seem we have learned nothing from any of them.” As a confessional format, this is not too surprising. Those sharing their thoughts are typically focused more on the immediate and not reflecting on the past. When expanding the search to “HIV” and “AIDS,” there was a total of three confessions. In both HIV references, the writer mentions they have HIV, or that a significant other has HIV, and they are worried for their health. These confessions fall in line with the genre, bringing past diagnoses into fear in the present.

The confession referencing the AIDS pandemic is unique. That writer asked, when the AIDS pandemic was at the height, “where were your measures then?” This confession calls out the government’s biases and inequalities when fighting different pandemics. With the HIV/AIDS pandemic initially seen as a “moral epidemic,” the health measures paled in comparison to the expedited measures put into place for COVID-19.

In the JOTPY, a similar search for the Spanish Flu or 1918/1919 found six artifacts directly linking to the past pandemic. The majority of the articles were assignments submitted by students who were instructed to compare and analyze the two pandemics. A few submissions analyzed media coverage of the Spanish Flu and found similarities with the present. On the topic of wearing masks, one article found a comic that is appropriate for the current pandemic. In the comic a person was asked why they were not wearing a mask. The person responded “It’s all Bosh! You won’t catch me wearin’ one!” The comic then proceeded to show the non-mask individual hanging out a window with stuff being thrown at him and then he quickly runs away.

These reflections are examples of how students brought in historical sources from the Spanish Flu to comment on the current pandemic. While they are remembering the Spanish Flu, the pretext demonstrated a framing measure used by professors and teachers. The students alone did not raise the memory, but instead were coaxed or assigned the project. Fittingly, the one outlying example was submitted by an MA Student in Public History at Northeastern University taking a museum studies course. The student explained, “Trying to think of some element of Boston history that was relevant today, I came up with the idea of the 1919-20 Flu pandemic. It was 100 years since the pandemic. Boston was the first hit city in the US, and I had seen news about the coronavirus spreading in China, so I felt very topical.” This artifact demonstrates how memory is recalled after being stimulated by an event. It also confirms a bias towards memory

recall. While undergrad students needed a prompt to analyze and reflect on the past, an MA student is more tuned in to global news and past events. The higher educated, both grad students and the professors, become the framers of how past pandemics are discussed when new pandemics arise. There was only one journal entry that mentioned AIDS and the reference was used to describe their experience with getting tested back when they were in law enforcement.

When numerically placed next to academic writing, it appears archival memory is firmly situated with the scholars and not the general public. Staub and Floris (2021) argued that when crises occur, “reflection on the learning processes from the past is initiated” (p. 318). Taking a look at Google search trends, they found a significant increase in “Spanish Flu” searches during March and April of 2020, approximately ten times the amount of any prior interest in the past decade. From the PubMed database they found a trend of increasing references to the Spanish Flu. One key question they ask for future research is “how researchers and the public recall the past during a new pandemic outbreak” (p. 319). Taking a look at the academic literature compared to the Coronavirus Confessions and the JOTPY, we already see a drastic vocal interest in the past by academics, but not so much by the general public. With the Google search trends showing public interest, perhaps a takeaway suggests the contributors to the confessions and the JOTPY see the archives as a place for cathartic release rather than past analysis. For the confessions, with a lack of any direct mentioning of the Spanish Flu, this can almost universally be the case. On the other hand, the JOTPY has a few references to the past demonstrating its contributors use the archive in different ways.

The number of institutionalized, compared to vernacular, articles of the Spanish Flu to COVID-19 demonstrates memory has power. Stuckey (1992) offered an example of the power of memory to alter political consciousness. She explained how Bush leveraged the WWII paradigm

to construct a memory that would support military engagement in the gulf. “His successful use of that rhetoric led to a revitalization of the World War II paradigm as a model for understanding the American military as the embodiment of that which is good and honorable in the American cultural psyche, as well as cultivating a belief that Americans as a people are destined to fulfill a democratic mission in the world” (p. 247). However, using historical analogies and orientational metaphors involves all aspects of the paradigms. “Bush may not have wanted ‘unconditional surrender’ as part of the World War II metaphor, but it was part of that metaphor, and Bush could not escape its implications” (Stuckey, p. 253-254). Leveraging the past has limitations. Leaders cannot cherry pick from the metaphor but must be prepared to deal with the whole memory. Using policies set in place from past pandemics brings more than just rules and regulations, but the memories accompany them as well. The multiple ways that “stay-at-home orders” were discussed, including “stay-at-home,” “shelter-in-place,” “self-isolation,” and “social distancing” created confusion. While they all may mean the same thing, rhetorically we understand that words have meaning and a history. What choices people use to discuss stay-at-home orders showcases how they remember COVID-19. Shelter-in-place compared to social distancing brings up completely different pictures and creates different emotional reactions. Especially if you have been involved in an active shooter drill. As a listener, the message you will internalize depends on how you heard the instructions in the past. The actual event becomes recalled in association with corresponding language and policy.

The recollection of these policies fall under the knowledge poll of memory. Rather than a direct connection to the past, these policies and associations are representations of the past event even without acknowledgement. Vinitzky-Seroussi and Maraschin explained:

“The knowledge pole of collective memory is differentiated from other forms of knowledge because it is produced with an evocation of the past as its *raison d'être*. Thus, the knowledge pole is not about knowledge itself, or at least not just about knowledge itself, but about the moment of its inception that is anchored in a specific past event” (p. 1478).

They go on to provide examples such as surveillance after 9/11, building improvements after earthquakes, and, directly related to COVID-19, quarantine measures after disease outbreaks. Measures taken up during COVID-19 are some examples of the knowledge poll of memory, where the past has influenced actions in the present.

John Witt's (2020) *American Contagions: Epidemics and the Law from Smallpox to COVID-19*, is a self-described “citizen’s guide to the ways in which American law has shaped and responded to the experience of Contagion” (p. 2). The actions taken to slow the spread of COVID-19 are based on suggestions and reactions learned from past pandemics, knowledge memory. “America’s first responses to the novel coronavirus were shaped by legal and political tools inherited from the past. The imperatives of the pandemic played a role, too, of course, but history conditioned American responses” (p. 107). From a national standpoint, Witt explained two main responses to epidemics: quarantine and sanitation. Quarantine responses seek to control and lock down movement to reduce spread, while sanitation responses look to enact policy that will improve environmental conditions, thus slowing the spread of the disease. The United States response to COVID-19 demonstrates both quarantine and sanitation methods, both of which were utilized during the Spanish Flu and have shaped global pandemic policies.

Demonstrating the global reach, Ratto, Cabrera, Zacharias, and Azerrat (2021) studied government policies in Latin America during the first wave. They found similar methods were

put into place, dividing them into the categories “restrictive, economic and sanitary contained measures” (p. 2102). They concluded that restriction measures, similar to quarantine policies, had the best effect on reducing daily new infections. There was also data showing differences between wealthy and poor countries, where wealthy countries were more efficient in implementing different strategies.

In a working paper by the IMF, Furceri, Loungani, Ostry and Pizzuto (2022) discussed the importance of looking at the past to respond to inequalities exacerbated by pandemics. They argued “in the absence of supportive policies to protect the vulnerable, the pandemic could end up exerting a significant impact on inequality” (p. 12). Taking data from the past, they proposed future policy initiatives should respond directly to inequalities in order to reduce the increase in the Gini coefficient. Sharma, Ghosh et al. (2021) certified the argument that pandemics disproportionately impact lower incomes. Focusing on the effect of past pandemics in India, they provided recommendations to help “revive the socio-economic conditions” (p. 33). These policies and recommendations represent a knowledge memory of past pandemics. They are not just responding to policies created at the time but are leveraging the past to provide recommendations in the present.

Sharma, Borah, and Moses (2021) discussed the importance of government and healthcare to learn from the past. Taken from the angle of organizational learning, they mirrored a lot of the knowledge pool of memory. “The SARS outbreak led to the creation of Emergency Outbreak Centers – a source of learning and knowledge repository, which has helped in effectively responding to COVID-19” (p. 600). These outbreak centers are a concrete example of the influence of past pandemics on the Coronavirus. Sharma, Borah, and Moses went on to provide policy recommendations for governments to help mitigate the effects of COVID-19.

Abideen, Mohamad, and Hassan (2020) also provided concrete policy recommendations based off of their systematic review of past strategies. They found that “traditional mitigation techniques adopted during past pandemics are in place but not capable of managing the transmission capability and virulence of COVID-19” (p. 547). Based on their research of economic depressions as a result of past pandemics, they argued “during this recession period, new fiscal-policy measures must come into play. For example, loan buyers have been greatly hit during this recent COVID-19 pandemic and are in dire need of loan waivers and liquidity programs” (p. 554). The ability to use the past to find new solutions for current problems demonstrates the importance of using knowledge memory. Without knowing the origins to current policies, implementation becomes stagnant, doing the same thing over again. As Sharma, Bora, and Moses pointed out, society must learn from the past to adapt old steps to solve current issues. Perhaps the saying ‘those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it’ is applicable in this situation.

In the current archives, discussions of policies are not consciously connected to the past. The knowledge poll in the vernacular is disrupted. Without knowing of the connection, discussions of current policy are temporally shortened. Academics and policy makers may have knowledge of the connection to the past, but the majority of the public is naïve on the relationship. The knowledge poll of memory appears to be reserved to the elite and demonstrates an opportunity for future critical memory studies.

While past pandemic stories have had time to ruminate in the public sphere, COVID-19 stories are uniquely volatile. The JOTPY and the Coronavirus Confessions are examples of participants' recordings as an event is unfolding. Carter and Mankoff (2005) argued media choice affected reconstruction through the diary study method, which occurs when “participants record

events as they happen” (p. 899). While these archives share a mediated format, their organization and call lead to differing reconstructions of COVID-19. In response to COVID-19, we are seeing an increase in the diversity of memory tools. Just in archives alone, there are ranges from the hyper local (Queen City memory project) to the national/global (Journal of the Plague Year), from the subject specific (OneWorld COVID-19) to the broad (Story Corps). Throughout this diversity, most archives are collected by libraries, museums, or academia. They become the collectors and ‘owners’ of memory performances.

While there is a universal call for stories, in studying memory we must acknowledge the weight historians and educators place on these artifacts. As Reznick and Koyle (2021) explained, the National Library of Medicine’s (NLM) “unparalleled collection of primary historical sources and growing digital collections of medical artifacts are depended upon by historical researchers and educators” (p.339). For this particular archive on COVID-19 we are reminded once again that those who control the archive “identify and select web and social media content” and “review recommended content for inclusion” (p. 339). While it may sound nefarious, logistics and memory space argue that we cannot keep everything.

Speaker and Moffatt (2020) shined a light on the methods NLM used to collect data. They collected static posts once, but for posts that changed they collected multiple forms over a time period to help document change. They even acknowledge that “some perspectives will not be documented or shared for a wide range of reasons, including technical barriers, opportunity, or personal choice of the creators” (p. 660). The NLM’s transparency provides a self-reported bias that helps mitigate some critical feedback. Not only is this method of transparency taken up by national libraries, Deyrup and Ponichtera (2020) documented Seton Hall University’s collection process for their archive on the COVID-19 pandemic. “Leveraging the use of cell

phones and social media” to gather oral histories, the curators’ goals were to reestablish a community, and provide a place for people to come back to in the future to reflect and study the past (p. 280). When researching COVID-19 memory we must acknowledge that we are researching the archived performance and not the complete actual event from every perspective. These memory performances tell us something about COVID-19, but also about those creating the archives and sending out calls for submissions.

In an issue dedicated to COVID-19 responses by museums, Levin (2020) described the “challenges museums and other exhibitionary institutions face as they adapt to rapidly changing conditions” (p. 295). COVID-19 has closed physical locations, reduced staff, and decreased budgets. With all these challenges, museums had to adapt to respond to a dynamically unfolding event. One example of a call that has evolved with the situation comes from the Museum of Chinese in America. Chu (2020) documented the transition of the OneWorld COVID-19 project. Initially focused on positive Asian American stories of resilience, the curators saw the importance of recording both the positive and the negative. Demonstrating the larger context around COVID-19, MOCA’s attention shifted away from the archive to spotlight activism in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. In May 2020 the OneWorld Collection partnered with Columbia University to help gather oral histories and share the archive with scholars and students. Throughout evolutions of collecting artifacts for their archive, MOCA demonstrated their own resilience on behalf of minority voices and reminded us of an important lesson. “The stories of surviving and persevering during this volatile time will become intrinsic to telling the story of America, and that story has to include the minority voices that have been stifled and omitted in the past” (p. 343).

Tebeau, a project director of the JOTPY, told the New York Times “What we as contributors record is what the future generations will remember” (Burch, 2020). To ensure global representation, they are reaching out to marginalized groups and have contributors across the world. Understanding the impact of memory on the present leads to the importance of contributing to pandemic memory now. As academics see this connection, we are reminded on who makes connections to the past. As the Journal of the Plague Year is born in academia, we see a variety of class assignments submitted along with assignment directions. As discussed earlier, historians and educators benefit considerably from extensive archives. By having students assigned to submit projects to an archive, they help to provide a database for future research projects.

The artifacts submitted by students ranged from history projects to writing papers. Most showed the instructor’s intention to provide stories to help those in the future understand the students’ current situation. One professor stated, “What gets remembered is what is documented.” Another professor, offering extra credit to students, explained “we must keep and curate information from all walks of life (rather than just the elite).” While the goal of finding and recording COVID-19 memories from all corners of the country is a noble cause, there must be acknowledgement that those in college already are part of a sub-elite group. From statistics in 2020, less than 40% of the US population above 25 has a college degree (Duffin, 2021). While the number is rising, it shows a high level of education inequality in the United States. Again, we see examples of how higher educated individuals help to frame memory in an attempt to create a ‘complete’ memory.

Some prompts ask students to record their daily life, while others were asked to observe “the world around them,” and some required the students to do both. Most assignments were

affiliated with college classes, with history classes clearly outnumbering other subjects. It makes sense that history professors are keen on creating records for future research. Outside of college assignments, there were two writing prompts from middle school teachers. These prompts were shorter and asked the students to write their choice of “a poem, a paragraph, a dialogue, a list, a diary entry ...anything to express yourself.” Both middle school assignments focused on getting the students to discuss how they felt in reaction to the pandemic. One asked how they were feeling with the “new reality,” while the other asked for “hopes and/or dreams for a post-covid world.” These lighter topics serve as reminders of the challenges faced in k-12 education. With teachers facing burn-out and virtual classes, the “... anything to express yourself” becomes a unified cry from tired voices at every school, begging students to join in on the conversation or participate in class.

While it is important to record memories of events, there is a warning on trying to capture the moment too soon. The immediacy of society to know removes the distance and time required to find commonality. As Han would argue, our speed culture has removed our ability to think past ourselves. By quickening our memory gathering, we end up losing the other. In turn, we lose a chance to come together around a collective memory.

When expediting trauma sharing, the borders around affect and time seem to blend. Soldiers coming back from World War 1 on ships used the voyage to debrief their experience in the war. Due to the length of the journey, they had time to reflect and share their memories with comrades who had gone through similar situations. Fast Forward to soldiers coming home from Afghanistan by airplane. One day they are in a combat zone and then in a matter of days they are home. There is a relation here in the elevated cases of PTSD. Digital technology provides an opportunity for debrief, but it also can expedite memory travel. COVID-19 is the largest

pandemic born in the digital era. Within months of the first major outbreaks, digital archives were created to help us remember. This urge for immediacy brings a plethora of data to study and allows people to come together and have a voice, but is our distance/reflection lost? Who are these archives for? Are memories of an ongoing pandemic worthwhile to record at the risk of Pandemic Stress? Or do these databases serve dual purposes- cathartic instruments, and archives of memory?

These questions cannot be answered now but require time. After COVID-19 is removed from our daily conversations³, future academics will reflect on what people went through and compare to their present. Perhaps we need to forget in order to gain distance; allowing us time to grapple with how our memories of COVID-19 can be used in our future present.

³ Some epidemiologists suggest that COVID-19 may not go away from our lives, but we may be able to control it to the point where it becomes mundane. In this case, conversations about COVID-19 as “pandemic” will be like the seasonal flu. This is an example of vernacular forgetting that stores memories of Coronavirus Pandemic on a shelf.

4 NORMAL COVID LIFE

*Now I just want to live a normal life
Get a fast car and a pretty wife
We could have children of our own
Settle down here until they're grown
We could buy a house out on the beach
And just die there, out of reach
Do you want to live
Do you want to live
Do you want to live a normal life with me*

-Joseph A. Hedges (Normal Life- song by July for Kings)

The concept of normal has changed over the years. With the pandemic, changes have accelerated to the point where identities have been threatened and forced to be reevaluated. While Hedges' song is written pre-COVID, its yearning for a "normal life" is echoed through the memories found in the Coronavirus Confessions and the JOTPY. The dream of a normal life, where one can find and secure an identity without threat becomes rhetorically represented in both the aforementioned lyrics and the archives. When performed, they provide a glimpse into how people negotiate with trauma and attempt to achieve normalcy.

An increase in uncertainty leads to higher levels of stress and tension. COVID-19 changed how society did things. Food service workers were laid off, teachers were no longer in the classroom, and student-athletes no longer had sports. As COVID-19 restrictions limited the actions and occupations associated with individual groups' identities, people had to reevaluate how they view themselves. Looking at the DICTION data from Appendix A.2 and comparing the certainty levels to those from the sentiment scores, the confessions (158.32 average sentiment certainty score, to 53.185 average identity certainty score) suggest a lower level of articulated certainty while the JOTPY (259.82 average, to 206.87) remains high. Again, we see differences

in the memories being performed. The confessions surrounding normalcy demonstrated a malleable disruption. They reflected the ephemeral conditions of a confession. The JOTPY submissions are more sustained, demonstrating a longer lasting challenge to what is normal.

Collective traumas impact identity. “Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of the acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity” (Alexander, p. 15). During Covid-19, student athletes were left without sports bringing an identity crisis. If there are no athletics, how can one be a student athlete? As an individual, the student was facing a self-identity crisis. When those students got together with others to organize a walk-out, demanding sports be played, their performance represented a move to collective. Another example, with the move to virtual school the concept of student and teacher changes. Community members called out teachers for not really teaching. While the health trauma did not cause a threat to these groups’ identity, societal response to COVID-19 created the conditions for their identity to be challenged.

The societal response and the collective stories told by former student-athletes and teachers construct trauma, “for trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society” (p. 7). Alexander argued “events do not, in and of themselves, create collective trauma. Events are not inherently traumatic. Trauma is a socially mediated attribution” (p. 17). The COVID-19 pandemic has applied pressure on groups and forced questions on how normally in person groups can exist outside of a physical place.

Public memory “offers to individuals a symbolic connection with the group and a sense of belonging to it” (p. 7). Yet, rhetorically speaking, “it does even more than that. It constructs identities that are embraced, that attract adherents (as well as dissidents)” (Alexander, p. 22). Shared memories of the past help to build community. Sturken explained “as a means by which

we remember who we are, memory provides the very core of identity” (p. 1). As an example, Hellier-Tinoco (2009) explored Mexican identity formation through four performances. She explained, “as these performances engage indigenous bodies and representations of indigenous and prehispanic bodies, so the material construction of sites of collective memory and of explorations of the eternal question “who am I?” enables twenty-first century Mexicans to grapple with the complexities and contradictions of living in contemporary Mexico” (p. 133). Remembering the past in certain ways builds certain identities. With the immediacy to capture COVID-19 memories, the creating of future group identities is interwoven with the present. As people remember the present, they either confirm or contest identity narratives. Through the sharing of norms and stigmas the archives provide a glimpse into how certain identities are formed and remembered through COVID-19.

The obstruction of norms during COVID-19 merged into threats of identity or threats to establishing an identity. Findyartini et al. (2020) studied how the change to medical teaching from COVID-19 impacted the professional identity of undergraduate medical students. They found students adapted with different coping mechanisms and reimagined their role as medical students. With the move to online delivery of instruction and some patient interaction, Findyartini et al. argued “the current pandemic has precipitated potentially life-changing experiences” (p.8). These experiences of in person socializing and learning on the floor of the hospital, help to mold medical students into the type of doctors they will be in the future. When this is taken away, they are forced to navigate their identity without a pivotal medical experience.

The memory of COVID-19 must take into account the impact normal situations have in helping individuals establish their identity. When normal situations are taken away, so too are the formative responses. Sequeria and Dacey (2020) found “students’ identities were negotiated

differently in face-to-face classrooms vs. virtual classrooms.” As educators faced new challenges to connect with students, they had to navigate internal and external threats to their identities as teachers. Internally, they dealt with their inner voice questioning their ability to move to virtual teaching and how they can provide an equitable classroom when some students did not have access to the internet. Sequeria and Dacey explained “our Selves and intersectional identities as educators interacted within ourselves (in the society of the mind) and with others (our students) extending into the environment causing us to question our pedagogical practices and how best to empower our students.” The worry of connecting virtually is not unsupported. One student in the *Journal of the Plague Year* shared, “learning online is much harder than usual, because it is much easier to not listen. Sure we are learning the same stuff as in school, but all the fun aspects of school disappear during online.” The student makes a distinction between learning online and school. To help reduce this distinction and reconcile the school identity online, teachers must incorporate some of the missing fun elements of normal school.

Externally, community members and parents questioned the importance of teachers when kids were stuck at home, essentially equating teachers with babysitters. This external pressure has an impact on one’s emotional state. One teacher in the *Coronavirus Confessions* stated “I am scared about going back into the classroom. Parents are uncaring about the danger to teachers.” On the other hand, some teachers worried about teaching their subject online, “I am a teacher. We are remote learning. The Canvas platform is complicated. Kids might not attend. My subject is for live in class.” Both of these examples showcase teachers dealing with their identities in different ways. One sees the ability to adapt based on health conditions while the other noticed challenges to actual job duties. The emphasis on either protecting themselves or providing a smooth lesson demonstrates the complex choices involved in education during a pandemic.

Numerous other accounts of the challenges teachers faced during COVID-19 can be found in the Coronavirus Confessions. One confession from a band director mentioned having over 220 kids creating an environment where “it’s inevitable that [they] and kids catch/spread” COVID. Along the same lines of the challenge to reduce spread, one teacher bemoaned the poor updating in the buildings leaves the class vulnerable, “decades of ignoring HVAC issues leave my classroom bad in normal conditions but a Petri dish w/Covid.” These examples demonstrate the thought process of teachers that now have to become aware of contagion spread ability. These challenges forced them to redevelop their role as teachers to become pathogen trackers and contact tracers. On top of trying to reduce spreads, districts are struggling to fill teacher vacancies and subbing roles. “What happens if too many teachers get sick or worse die? Who will teach then? Some schools can’t even find subs.” One sub of over 17 years shared that they “covered for 6 different teachers the past 2 days.” There are also stories of states calling in the national guard to help cover classes or offering incentives for custodial staff to substitute teach and work on their teaching license. These new substitute teachers still had to contend with the risks everyday teachers faced. A veteran turned teacher shared, “I feel less safe as a teacher, than I did on active duty. I feel like my life matters less also.” The conditions brought about by the pandemic and the mitigation plans implemented by school administrations showcased how identity shifts in response to changes. The need to find teachers and the lack of subs demonstrates an absence of teachers. While these confessions are not from the perspective of those changing their identity, it does show how teachers and subs are leaving the profession, and thus changing removing their title as teacher or substitute.

While the prior threats required adaptations to how to achieve their identity, in the end the fundamentals still existed. Some identities were based on something they no longer were

able to do, forcing them to deal with the consequences. Zhang, Wang and Rickly (2021) explained how COVID-19 impacted the identity of tourist. They suggested “at the heart of tourism is the interaction of people and places. However, as social distancing and quarantine become increasingly embedded in our lives, the ways we interact with people and place through travel are being altered.” Even though museums and other tourist destinations created virtual tours, the impact of people in place was missing. Zhang, Wang and Rickly provided three components of social identity that were threatened by COVID-19: cognitive, evaluative, and emotional. Cognitive components enable an individual to become aware of being part of a group. When visiting in person, other tourists are there interacting, you gain a sense of togetherness. Not only are you witnessing the place, but you are also unified with others in the same environment. This brings up the evaluative component, and the ability to identify differences in groups. In person, you notice who is a tourist and who is an employee. Online, the other is removed. You are alone in experiencing the destination with just those in your current place. Often the employees are hidden behind the screen. The final component, emotional, derives from the prior two. In typical group identity you create attachments or bonds. There is an investment into the group. COVID-19 has removed the other, thus removes the ability to gain the bonds necessary to form emotional attachments over shared space.

The change in tourist identity can also be applied to the destination and be directly linked to the town of Coachella after the music and art festival was cancelled due to the pandemic. As noted by a story in the *Journal of the Plague Year*, large festivals and concerts were cancelled throughout the US. As the author explained, “This means a great deal of money and jobs have been lost . . . when tourists can’t come or events are cancelled it is devastating.” Another story in the *JOTPY* described the emotional toll of closing their immersive theater after running for six

months when it took two and half years to build; “For a while, it felt like I had a lost a child. So young and full of potential that died before it’s time. There was a pain of losing something you’ve worked so hard to grow from the ground up.” Captured in this quote is the emotional heartbreak not only of a person who lost their business but lost their identity and dreams.

While these examples demonstrated a change to tourism, *Real, Rural Concerns* shared tourists were still visiting “to get their last ski runs in, and first hikes and rafting trips of the year.” The author was cautiously positive about tourist showing up because the town was reliant on tourism; however, even with tourists some of the local restaurants and businesses closed.

In the artifacts discussing closings or canceling, it is important to look at how it is phrased. The majority of stories make reference to the pandemic or COVID-19, “cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” “not immune to this pandemic.” These stories attribute the current situation to an outside force, uncontrollable. In contrast, instead of directly referencing the pandemic, one story blamed the restrictions, “health restrictions caused many local concert venues to close and let many struggling musicians and artists to find other means of work.” The rhetorical choice of the author to choose a mitigation policy rather than the pandemic itself highlighted the role policy makers played. Placing health restrictions as the cause of closings and job loss, puts those making the decisions in the hot seat. Job loss relates to the memory of the COVID-19 pandemic. When someone loses a job, their identity changes; they become part of the outgroup.

For some groups, their identity gave others an excuse to discriminate against them. “Stigma is the deleterious, structural force that devalues members of groups that hold undesirable characteristics” (Budhwani and Sun, 2020). It is a social performance that is created from biases used to demonstrate power over that certain group. Stigmas connection to pandemics is not new.

Multiple scholars have recalled past epidemics such as Tuberculosis, HIV, AIDS, Leprosy, Ebola, and H1N1 when describing stigmatization during COVID-19 (Abdelhafiz and Alorabi, 2020; Bhanot, Singh, Verma, and Sharad, 2021; Ransing et al., 2020; Turner-Musa, Ajayi, and Kemp, 2020; Villa et al., 2020). Bhanot, Singh, Verma, and Sharad explained “stigmatization is a social process set to exclude those who are perceived to be potential source of disease and may pose threat to the effective social living in the society.” Stigma is performed by a society that sees the identity of those ill or previously ill as a threat to normalcy. Goffman (1963) went beyond illness and argued stigma is attributed to any group who is perceived to be outside the normal societal standards. For these groups, their perceived social facing identity or virtual social identity becomes the excuse for stigmatization rather than their actual social identity. Goffman explained that the effect of stigmatization leads to a change in ego identity or how the stigmatized see themselves. In summary, socially performed stigma challenges and changes individual identity.

To reduce future stigma, we must acknowledge its connection with memory and communication. We must learn from our past in order to communicate effectively in the future. As Villa et al aptly ended, “if we want to move towards a world where precise public and global health interventions prevail, then precise communication to prevent stigma is imperative” (p. 1451). Memory performances have the ability to shape and destroy identity. Remembering COVID-19 concurrently through archives and research provides a real time glimpse into how identities are being affected by stigmas.

Bagchi (2020) found healthcare workers sometimes faced social harassment and extra precautions due to their perceived higher risk. These stigmatizations increased mental distress for a group already with high mental fatigue. Not only did health care workers face stigmas, patients

of COVID-19 and family members also received public judgement. This judgement does not go away after recovery, instead the label of COVID-19 becomes part of the patient's identity. "COVID-19-induced stigma can profoundly plunge individuals. . . . into isolation and worthlessness" (Peprah and Gyasi, 2020, p.1). Peprah and Gyasi highlighted some of the stigmas included ejection from housing, denial of jobs on top of verbal abuse and social isolation. The long-term effects, both health-related and social, are similar to those evoked by the experience of chronic illnesses. Charmaz (2010) explained "the vicissitudes of chronic illness may be blurred by overwhelming hardships to everyday life". Chronic illnesses and COVID-19 are an assault on normal life. Things patients were once able to do, they no longer were able to do, whether for health reasons or the social limitations put into place. The disruption to life brings uncertainty and identity crises. In a study on ill men, for example, Charmaz (1994) argued when men are met with chronic illnesses they must negotiate assumptions about masculinity. Through different identity management processes they seek out ways to create a stable identity that helps provide comfort through unknown times.

Illnesses and COVID-19 impact more than the individual. Turner-Musa, Ajayi and Kemp as well as Ransing et al. (2020) explained COVID-19 related stigma (COS) goes beyond those who are affected directly by the disease, it is connected to assumptions based on race and poverty. COVID-19 has disproportionately affected different races and social economic classes. Anderson, Lopez, and Simburger (2021) showed minority clusters have a higher rate of infection. While prior research, explained in the previous chapter, showed inequality is due to social structures and access to affordable health care, stigmas spread when false narratives are shared about the increase in cases in low social economic classes and ethnic minorities.

Stigma is a performance that can be spread rhetorically. Villa et al. explained that the “use of language by some media, newspapers and political leaders sometimes contributes to fueling stigma” (p. 1450). The rhetorical act of stigmatizing takes on the form of othering. Calling COVID-19 the “Chinese virus” or “China virus” is xenophobic. Associating a virus with a group of people perpetuates false myths and increases racial hate. Budhwani and Sun (2020) compared tweets deriving from the term “Chinese virus” from a pre-period (March 9-15) and post-period (March 19-25). The dates were centered around President Trump’s March 16th tweet calling the coronavirus the “Chinese virus.” They found a “ten-fold increase at the national level,” going from 16,535 to 177,327, demonstrating how quickly social media is used to spread stigma. This particular stigma attacks an ethnic and racial identity, that is used to unethically justify hate messages towards those with Chinese or Asian descent. Reny and Barreto (2020) connected the false labeling to anti-Asian attitudes. Based on their survey, they suggested “anti-Asian attitudes are associated with concern about the virus, but also with xenophobic behaviors and policy preferences” (p. 209). The Coronavirus Confessions and the JOTPY are broad archives that unintentionally silence stigmatizing and othering during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, The One World Archives houses some of the stories from those who have experienced this sense of othering based on their identity. As a society, when we remember COVID-19 we must also engage with these archives and learn from the stories of those who have experienced stigma and othering.

Historically, like stigma, pandemics have been used as a cover to instigate othering. Banerjee, Kallivayalli, and Rao (2020) explained historically, pandemics have “amplified hate and socioeconomic division, and the effect outlast the outbreak itself” (p. 102). Dionne and Turkmen (2020) argued “pandemics such as COVID-19 exacerbate the marginalization of

already oppressed groups” (p. 213). They researched past pandemics and found a trend of othering and blame; however, othering discourse was “only a marginal concern for mainstream international relations scholarship” (p. 214). This highlights the need to record the presence or absence of othering in digital archives. For future memory work on COVID-19, we must acknowledge the limitations of our artifacts and provide a chance to counter amnesia. There is no doubt that othering happened during COVID-19. Yet, the minority cases of othering in the JOTPY and Coronavirus Confessions demonstrates a form of silencing. This confirms the need to contrast current academic literature on COVID-19 and othering to the minute absence in the selected digital archives.

As threats to norms rise, thus increasing levels of anxiety and stress, stigmas become socialized instruments. The COVID-19 pandemic has been used as a façade to instigate racial and ethnic othering. Meinhof (2020) argued the West’s underestimated response to COVID-19 was due in part “in the way public discourse framed the virus along the lines of liberal/authoritarian or modern/backward.” Meinhof suggested that three types of attitudes surfaced that influenced the framing: sinophobic racism, new orientalism, and colonial temporality. These attitudes essentially othered the virus, creating a mentality of “it can’t happen here.” Meinhoff explained four problems as a result of these attitudes; 1) framing disguised “crude racism as political critique,” 2) “it distracted from the question how well equipped Europe and the USA were to fight the virus,” 3) “it informed the argument that Chinese successful strategies against the outbreak would not be applicable in democratic countries,” and 4) “being obsessed with liberal vs authoritarian disease control, many people overlooked the possibility to learn from liberal democratic South Korea, which excelled at getting Covid-19 under control.” These attitudes formed an identity that was put into question when the virus arrived in Europe

and the USA. The health crisis had an additional identity crisis. By othering the virus, when the virus came to the West, the West had to renegotiate the narrative.

Othering of the virus is not unique to the west. Dong and Chang (2008) argued the AIDS epidemic in China has been “presented in an ‘us vs them’ news discourse that helps convey the official knowledge as to how AIDS is to be perceived and understood in the country” (p. 357). Schmidt et al. (2020) interviewed participants in South Africa and found “false information circulated on social media not only instigated confusion, fear and panic, but also contributed to the construction of misconceptions, othering and stigmatizing responses to COVID-19.” The media in India did a similar thing with COVID-19. Raina and Banerjee (2020) argued the media, which “reinvigorates the popular support for the leader, showcased a “twisted narrative of the demonic other” by sustaining a conspiracy that one religion is spreading the virus around India. They explained that “the outbreak of the pandemic created a twin threat to the state and its ruling ideology.” One being the health threat, the other being the threat to the ruling identity. “The greater threat for the state was the creation of a kind of ‘social solidarity’ in fighting the virus which would directly challenge the reproduction of the fantasy of the demonic other and could shake the very foundation on which the ruling ideology is based.” The media, helping to sustain the official account, created a ‘them’ or other to reduce the larger threat of unity to the ruling power.

In academia, studies have looked at how media covers pandemics. Atlani-Duault, Mercier, Rousseau, Guyot, and Moatti (2015) studied online scapegoating in France during the H1N1 virus. They found that while digital communication has evolved, the basic construction of scapegoating still exists: “denying their shared humanity permits a distancing from feelings of moral and political responsibility.” Yet, there is an added dimension, “sharing such projections

online bestows a comforting sense of legitimacy and gives both authors and their readers the impression of being able to transgress certain social taboos and thus escape from their feelings of impotence” (p. 56). While the study takes place mainly in France, it provides a backdrop to better understand the othering taking place during COVID-19. Furthermore, isolation and anxiety due to COVID-19 may drive some to find belonging and togetherness by joining groups engaged in othering/scapegoating.

In the search for identification and consubstantiality, Burke discussed the process of guilt redemption. As Burke explained it, the inherently tragic human condition inevitably evokes guilt. Rhetoric then becomes a symptom and cause of the public’s eagerness to purge its guilt. Scapegoating provides an outlet for helplessness by creating a root cause. It gives the group somewhere to aim their attention/energy towards, giving them a simple explanation. For Burke, there are two main ways to frame the scapegoat: mortification and victimization. Mortification internalizes the guilt and performs a confession. In mortification the group accepts the guilt and seeks forgiveness. Essentially, a group of individuals rhetorically crucifies itself in the hope their audience can take pity and create unity.

Victimization externalizes the guilt and places blame on the outside. While there are options to externalize guilt on the virus, or the historical conditions that led to the pandemic, most often victimization is used to promote hatred towards an outgroup. Leaders rhetorically create a visible external enemy allowing followers to blame all their guilt and troubles on that group. Burke repeatedly demanded as critics we have an obligation to point out victimization and bring truth to power. Looking into these archives, we must examine how guilt and blame are performed. In the case of victimization during COVID-19, it was easier to see a group of people as the culprit rather than an invisible virus.

While racial othering was limited in the archives, there are beginning formations of an us-versus-them mentality. This attitude is connected to a third person bias that van der Meer, Brosius and Hameleers (2022) described happens when people assume others are more affected by misinformation, and thus are at higher risk. This mentality places the person in a privileged position, above the misinformed other. Scoy et al. (2022) found “participants attributed non-compliance with COVID-19 behaviors to other groups, setting themselves apart from those Others.” Instead of racial othering, people created a group identity around the mitigation actions that others either took or ignored.

People in the confessions pleaded with others to just do their part. “Science is selfish. Wear a mask.” “Why am I wishing all these people not social distancing gets COVID-19? This is why I never liked group projects. #DoYourPart.” These stories centered around calling out those not wearing masks or not social distancing. A majority of the confessions labeled the other as selfish and blamed them for the prolonging of the pandemic. “I’m horribly angry at everyone who doesn’t take this seriously and is risking the lives of everyone around them. You’re selfish” “So angry when non-compromised people won’t wear masks in public. They are the ones prolonging this pandemic. Selfish Jerks!” Important to point out in this confession is the acceptance that there are groups that are unable wear a mask; however, sometimes these groups are not easily identified by outside appearance. While some people are yelling at others to put on masks, they sometimes overlook the needs of the other. “Have sensory processing disorder, masks are intolerable, but I’m trapped because I can’t trust people not to be jerks about masks.” This confession can be seen in multiple ways. The first is from the standpoint of a person being yelled at to put on a mask, the second is a call for others to wear a mask. Both situations were present during the pandemic and represent how the actions of one can impact another.

The actions of others have led some to contemplate leaving their profession. “I will leave nursing after COVID. There are too many selfish people. I am tired of suffering due to people’s selfish choices.” “I resigned as of today. Science over politics.” The behavior of the other goes beyond the pandemic, and will impact how people interact with them in the future. “At this point, I feel more concerned about the selfish, dangerous behavior of my ‘fellow citizens’ than I do about the virus.” “I’m disappointed that my feelings that people on average are too stupid or selfish to do what’s best for everyone has proven true.”

The idea of extending the attitudes towards the other after the pandemic can also be applied to views of Americans as a whole. Based on the actions of some, people expressed their negative feelings towards Americans. “I’m in Australia and worry I’ll never see my parents again, and all because Americans are too selfish to do the right thing.” “I had no idea how rude, selfish, and downright hateful Americans are as a group.” This application of negative traits towards a group of people based on the actions of a few demonstrates a form of othering. It also affects those internally in the group, “Horried that people are not taking this seriously. How selfish can we be? Embarrassed to be an American.”

Beyond the unidentified others, the confessions also show how people react when those they think they know fail to follow expected mitigation efforts. “The biggest surprise and eye opener: people I thought I knew behaving in the most irrational ways about the pandemic and masks.” “When I see a group of people I know. . . all close together WITH THEIR CHILDREN and not a single mask in sight. . . I GET SO ANGRY!” The actions of family members and friends ends up altering their relationships. “I’m angry at my sister for seeing our elderly father without proper precautions. If he dies from COVID I won’t forgive her.” “My list of friends is going to get a lot shorter. . . removing everyone who won’t wear a mask.” This last example

demonstrates how the identity of a friend group is affected by the actions of those who do not follow mitigation recommendations. For another individual, their actions to not attend excluded them from their former friends, “So many ‘friends’ lost due to not wanting to go to their get togethers. Sorry I value my health and family more than having fun.”

These performances of othering in the CC and JOTPY echo the findings of Scoy et al. They explained the importance of pointing out these attitudes:

“Identifying a new source of othering is problematic, particular in the context of COVID-19-related othering, as othering among vaccinated and non-vaccinated is closely linked political division in the United States. Politicizing healthcare does not help patients, and politicizing pandemics promotes othering in the forms of ethnic and racial discrimination, hate speech and aggression”

The othering occurring in the Coronavirus Confessions demonstrates a move to contested versions and memories of COVID-19. Examples of placing blame on the other not only reflects prior political unresolved issues but puts forth a trajectory of future partisanship. The performance and creation of the other helps to solidify distinct group identities, that will ultimately lead to contested and partial memory. While the next chapter discusses memories contestation and partiality, us-versus-them mentality confirms a new normal of politicizing.

When dealing with norms and COVID-19, the term “new normal” is inescapable. An exhaustive discussion of its use would make for an entire book, thus a brief mention is provided for contextual purposes. “New normal” has a history, reemerging when society changes after a crisis. The new situation is prolonged for some time that it becomes the average, the new normal is not new, the current society has just surpassed prior society. During COVID-19 when virtual celebrations were labeled the “new normal” they were not new, but instead were taking place for

many months beforehand. The label was attributed only after prolonged uses of virtual celebrations out averaged in-person celebrations.

Studying the best way to promote mitigation norms, Rimal and Storey (2020) proposed three ways to view how norms are formed; directed experience, symbolically through media, and imaginatively. Particular to COVID-19, they observed social distancing drove “people to rely more on symbolic and imagined sources of information to understand what other are doing and what is acceptable” (p. 2). Rather than direct view, people perceive the norm based on what they read, or imagined. This demonstrates the importance of publicly accessible COVID-19 narratives as they help to establish the COVID-19 norms of the readers. The more narratives about wearing mask, the more likely the reader will associate the norm as wearing a mask. Looking at the norms presented in the archives provides insight into what norms are remembered from COVID-19 and what norms are potentially carried into the new normal.

In the *Journal of the Plague Year*, one story described the change in Costco’s food court that is being carried out across the food industry, “there are self-checkout kiosks where you order and pay, then go up to the window to pick up your food.” While these types of kiosks have been around before the pandemic; their ability to reduce human contact have made them a popular tool for the food industry to implement. Even after elevated risks from the pandemic are lowered, these kiosks are going to be part of the new normal. With a noticeable amount of job wanted adds posted by fast food and restaurants, the kiosks help to reduce the number of human employees to efficiently run a store.

Another example from the JOTPY showcases how we enact our current norms into media consumption. “A habit I started picking up is whenever I would watch movies or tv shows I was pointing out that people were not wearing masks. That’s a scary though knowing that masks have

become an external part of our identity.” With the increase in masks and normalization of wearing them in society, this story represented how we are affected by norms. Even when watching media that was probably created before the pandemic, we do a double take or at least the thought of “where are their masks” floats across our minds.

Turning to the Coronavirus Confessions, one story shared, “there is still so much joy, happiness, and peace that can be found in our new non-normal normal.” A lot of confessions mentioned the positive aspects of working from home and hoped the new normal would allow more jobs to continue working remotely. “I don’t ever want to return to ‘normal’ with work. I’m more productive working from home, I now have 4 hrs/day of my life back.” “I hope we normalize working from home for those who are able. No point in sitting in traffic every day.” Both of these confessions demonstrated a trend that business experts are expecting to stick around, remote work. From the perspective of the employee, it reduces commute times and allows more time at home. On the business front, it reduces overhead and studies found some productivity increases when employees have the freedom to work on their own time. One thing to keep in mind, this new normal is not for everyone. “First time working from home in an 18-year career... I suck at it. Went to the office one-day just for a normal routine.” As we remember COVID-19 and the norms conceived by the pandemic and mitigation policies, we must acknowledge the struggle some people face in adapting.

With new norms becoming more routine, one confession reminds us of the new emotional normal that many faced. “I lost the man I loved because of this pandemic. I don’t want normal yet because that means I’m alone and it scares me.” In the five stages of grief, acceptance bridges the gap from the old norms to the new normal. This confession exemplifies the movement millions are forced to make into the new normal. They are met with a changing world

that has norms born from the same pandemic that took away a loved one. Demonstrated by policies established from prior pandemics, the knowledge pole of memory suggests as these new norms becomes mundane, the memories associated with their birth will fade. Whether negatively or positively associated, the new normal will become routine.

As new norms are established, people are renegotiating identities. Whether it is those coping with a new label of essential worker or a new job entirely, the memory of COVID-19 impacts their future identity. Loustaunau et al. (2021) argued for a reevaluation of precarious labor after COVID-19 impacted essential workers. The change in working conditions for essential workers brought about more precarity in the form of longer hours leading to new and unpredictable assignments, increase chances to contract the virus, and elevated levels of fear and anxiety. Loustaunau et al compared the temporal precarity of those laid-off to essential workers, acknowledging the different forms of precarious labor. They labeled the essential employ as “precarious stability- uncertain and short-term scheduling and hours stability accompanied by increased unpredictability of daily tasks” (p. 861). One worker in their study explained how the increase tensions of going to work during the pandemic, “sometimes it just feels crippling stressful, because there’s not anything I can do, and I have to go to my job, in the public, which is scary” (p. 868). The role of essential worker forced employees to make tough decisions; the economic welfare provided by a job at the cost of increase threat, both bodily and emotionally. While the media initially called these individuals heroes, claiming they are keeping the economy going, Loustaunau et al explained most workers in the retail, hospitality, and food service sectors “had no choice other than to be essential and precarious, and continue to work” (p. 871). The feeling of having no choice is also highlighted in education by teachers sharing their stories with the Coronavirus Confessions.

Discussing the call to go back in person, a teacher shared that “Our district has 6,200 kids and 800 staff. What 7,000 person business has resumed normal operations without COVID outbreaks?” In charge of a classroom, if the teacher wants to keep their job they have no choice but to return in person. While some in-person districts provided a medical leave of absence, these were limited for a certain number of days. Often times, teachers who took these cases ended up retiring or finding another profession.

Another district offered students the choice to be in person or virtual; however, teachers again did not have that luxury; “A school teacher teaching students in the classroom and digital in a dirty building. I will do what it takes to protect myself.” Teaching on a hybrid plan involves multiple prep and increases the workload of teachers. When everyone is doing the same thing, whether in person or virtual, the teacher can focus on one delivery mood. With the implementation of hybrid classes and requirements of synchronous learning, teachers had no choice but to try and teach to in-person and virtual students simultaneously. The challenges current teachers face has led some retired teachers to respond. “Retired always-underpaid-but-happy teacher. There’s not enough \$ in the world that would induce me to teach in this pandemic.” This confession acknowledged the historic challenge of teachers being underpaid but noted that the challenges teachers face in the pandemic cannot be solved by financial compensation.

Demonstrated in these confessions are different coping mechanisms to help respond to identity threats. Jaspal and Nerlich (2020) described two coping strategies used during COVID-19: Denial and anticipatory restructuring. Denial can be represented by those who deny the severity or the existence of COVID-19. When organizations or individuals decide to continue their paths without mitigation, their responses downplay the threat to identity. When there is no

perceived threat, then identity can remain unchanged. School's continuing in person without virtual options allowed teachers to continue teaching in person, without the need to renegotiate their identity as classroom teachers. On the other side, "anticipatory restructuring involves acceptance of the representation of social distancing and restructuring of identity so that one can take actions to mitigate risk." Instead of using the identity to deny the existence of a threat, this coping strategy allows a group or individual to evaluate the core values of their identity and create a new identity that allows room for mitigation measures. This was exemplified by teachers calling themselves virtual educators as they moved their classroom instruction online. While the core of teaching remained the same, their new identity allowed them to negotiate changes brought on by COVID.

These changes also opened space to create a larger group identity. Virtual teachers, regardless of room size/numbers/subject, shared a commonality through online instruction. This is not to say all online instruction is the same, but the move from in-person to virtual helped to unify teachers across the globe. There are stories of teachers making videos and sharing them with their colleagues, creating an online space for engagement and growth. The new hybrid educators were able to escape the confines of the halls and connect with each other in a virtual space. This falls in line with Ashforth (2020) who noted the trend of eroding organizational identification. With an increase in virtual opportunities, the identities of employees are no longer tethered to the in-person organization. While this can provide positive opportunities to create an identity with those outside of normal interaction, there is a risk of losing organization identity. Organization identity risk showcases it is not just individuals that have to renegotiate their

identity, but organizations such as governments, companies, and schools must reevaluate their own identity⁴.

Present memories of the pandemic help to shape how we view ourselves as part of a group. For a rhetorical scholar, there is a connection with Burke's identification. By attributing past guilt to an external force, a speaker can create identification and a base for a group identity to be constructed. Essentially the past guilt is a memory that needs to be revised/ reinterpreted. Some COVID-19 narratives highlight cases of othering in the attempt to find identity. While this would unite one group, it ultimately creates a fragmented and contested memory of the pandemic.

By expunging the guilt onto outside groups, individuals form a collective identity. Those groups then play a role in how one interprets the pandemic, both in the present and in the future. Kraig (1997) suggested "Chase's successful re-narration of American history as an antislavery story also has implications for our understanding of ideological force of historical narrative" (p. 249). Chase's narration demonstrates the constructive aspect of memory used to create an identity, that in turn is used to create a social and political consciousness. Kraig reinforced the power of historical narratives saying, they are "a force for ideological transformation" (p. 235) and that "each successive narrative prepares the audience to accept the next, and in the end previously fractured and incoherent history is rendered as a unified whole" (p. 250). The continual use of narrative showcases how people build upon past memories to construct a political/social consciousness. In the case of COVID-19, stories may build on, or contest, each other to create a memory of the pandemic.

⁴Further interest in government response can be found in Templeton et al who studied how governments can use identity processes to reduce structural inequalities exposed by COVID-19.

The creation of us-versus-them mentality of mitigation actions demonstrates a memory of the COVID-19 as political. While racial othering occurred, the majority of othering exposed in the archives showed identities created by a person's compliance or rejection over mitigation efforts. Becher, Stegmüller, Brouard, and Kerrouche (2021) studied how political ideology impacted noncompliance of health guidelines. They found that in the US, "ideology plays an outsized role" in deciding health behaviors (p. 2106). In other industrial countries, ideology and health is non-linear. The high presence of bipartisan rhetoric in the US and us-versus-them mentality exacerbates the ideology gap and impacts compliance of health behaviors. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Becher et al., the identities created in the US are different than other countries.

Wolaver and Doces (2022) found similar differences in political ideology and COVID-19 risk perceptions. Their "results showed that Trump voting category is the most important contributor to perceived COVID-19 risks" (p. 1). As Trump downplayed the pandemic, the data showed that those identified as Trump supporters internalized his message and united around the downplaying of risks. Instead of following guidelines based on health risks, they attached themselves to a political figure and formed an identity of anti-mitigation or pro-freedom. Even after increases in cases, risk perception remained based on ideology. Wolaver and Doces argued "these polarized risk perceptions may at this point be baked in and resilient to data on the spread of COVID-19" (p. 13). This supports a denial coping mechanism, where identity was formed prior to the event and rather than changing, the group digs in deeper.

Formation and attachment of social identity and political ideology goes deeper than the pandemic. The roots of bipartisan politics were set before the pandemic; however, conflicting and confusing responses towards COVID-19 increased the gap. Collins, Mandel and Schywiola

(2021) explained “partisan messaging can strongly affect subsequent attitudes and beliefs of affiliated persons.” They found group ideology played a bigger role than personal experience. Even when people were directly impacted by COVID-19, their health actions and beliefs most often aligned with their group ideology⁵. Remembering COVID-19 and its impact on identity highlights an ideology chasm that helps to create a partial and contested view of the pandemic.

⁵ For further interest, Cruwys, Stevesna and Greenaway (2020) provided a social identity perspective on the psychological nature of group members and health perceptions and behaviors. In an oversimplified summary, COVID-19 has increased the power of group think.

5 TWO POLARIZED VIEWS

*There will always be two different views
Of the same thing baby
Two many views that can collide
There will always be those two different views
Too many views with loaded pride
-The Fixx*

The pandemic has exposed some underlying issues in racial and economic inequalities. The threat to identity boils over to a polarization of views, deserving more attention. Studying how COVID-19 is remembered demonstrates the partial and contested nature of memory that exposes and perhaps increases inequalities and divisions. The song *Two Different Views* by The Fixx aptly catches this characteristic of memory. Memory will always be contested, having multiple sides or views. As demonstrated in the prior chapter, those views are held tight, and the memory often becomes a source of a pride. One journal entry explained “Americans seem to value the economic standpoint of their nation and their freedom to do whatever they desire, even if it means potentially killing someone, just to maintain that status of ‘freedom’ that they pride themselves so much in.” When trying to establish a coherent memory, pride and contestation result in partial remembering. Some things are remembered, others are left out, intentionally or unintentionally.

The construction of memory can be viewed as the balance between remembering and forgetting. Memory construction requires choice. As one Coronavirus Confession states, “There have been plagues and pandemics from the beginning of time. Why does it seem we have learned nothing from any of them?” This confession demonstrated how although an event has happened, it does not automatically become part of the collective memory of a group or learned from. The choice was either to include a traumatic experience in our cultural memory, or to overshadow the moment with celebrations of the end of World War I. Whenever an option is chosen, there

inevitably is an option that is not used. In terms of memory when the option not used is continually pushed aside across generations, it becomes known as ‘cultural amnesia.’ Sturken explained “the ‘culture of amnesia’ actually involves the generation of memory in new forms, a process often misinterpreted as forgetting. Indeed, memory and forgetting are co-constitutive processes; each is essential to the other’s existence” (p. 2). A culture of amnesia goes beyond forgetting one time but is entangled in the process of memory construction. Wolin (1989) suggested “the event is not actually forgotten, only publicly uncalled. We might call such events ‘collective wrongs’ to mark their complicitous and historical character, their memorability as it were” (p. 34).

The past constructed through narrative allows the rhetor to create a present social and political consciousness or collective memory. Irwin-Zarecka saw collective memory “as a socially articulated and socially maintained ‘reality of the past’ (p. 54). Collective memory reality has a lot in common with Walter Fisher’s narrative rationality due to an articulation of memories as stories. “Collective memory, by virtue of it representing mostly the pasts we have no experiential access to, cannot be subject to the same reality checks as discussed above. But it is the subject to similar expectations, indeed, it draws its plausibility claims from the commonly perceived connection to lived human experience” (Irwin-Zarecka, p. 18). A line of work incorporating the narrative aspect into memory studies centers on creating a political/social consciousness.

Different views yield different narratives. The story of an event told from the winners’ perspective is different from the losers’ perspective. The narrative of a game can best be understood by looking at both stories. What appeared to be a blow out, or a game blown by a bad call from the referee, ends up, perhaps, a competitive game that comes down to missed free

throws. Even when covering factual events, stories can provide different narratives. The COVID-19 event serves as an example of how different narratives are created around the same event. While these narratives may never merge into one coherent story, it is important to examine the basic elements that may cause fragmentation and division. For example, pre-existing levels of high partisanship, revved up by the Trump candidacy, created an environment where once he took office the sides were made to appear to have irreconcilable differences. Further, an ideological rift between Trump and Democrats trickled down to a confusion around truth. And this finally furthered mistrust in government and health agencies. The confusion and noise silenced the root causes of inequalities highlighted by the pandemic.

5.1 Partisanship and Trump

The memory of COVID-19 includes contributions from different people, not just the decision makers. Communication in a rational perspective relies on a collective shared knowledge. This makes communication difficult for groups disagreeing on facts or beliefs. Consider, for instance, group gathering restrictions and the different reactions they elicit from the public. When Ralph Northam, the Virginia governor, announced restrictions to slow the additional spread of COVID-19 during the Thanksgiving holiday, Campbell County voted to reject the governor's orders. Rationally the orders were backed by medical studies; however, the rejection of the order can be seen as a contested memory. Communication relies on shared experience or beliefs. The COVID-19 experiences of Campbell County citizens differed from the governors; thus, different reactions responding to the virus were taken.

The response from one conservative county to reject a restriction set by a liberal governor helped to expose polarized tribal response to COVID-19, predicated by society's political polarization. Society has become further polarized with faction leaders or political leaders

seeking to maintain power over their bases. If we all agree, leaders fear they would lose their power, as previously demonstrated by Raina and Banerjee in India. In an ABC News/Ipsos poll following President Biden's first 100 days in office, views on a divided country were split among party lines, "with 95% of Democrats saying the country is either more united (45%) or the same (50%), and 97% of Republicans saying the nation is more divided (65%) or the same (32%)" (Karson, May 2, 2021). When put together, it seems no matter the issue there will be different views.

Rovny et al. (2022) served as a foil to political ideology in the US. They argued "preexisting ideological stances of Europe's political parties shaped their response to emerging Covid-19 policy issues and public concerns" (p. 1). Of particular interest is how "party ideology powerfully predicts how parties, both in government and in opposition responded to the pandemic" in Europe when compared to studies in the US that showed support for Trump overshadowed party influence (Kaushal, Lu, Shapiro and So, 2021; Morris, 2021) (p. 1). This may explain why the Trump Administration took a different approach to Rovny et al.'s findings that "government parties are generally more likely to take pro-active containment and stricter government-controlled enforcement measure, while also more likely to be guided by science in their decision making" (p.7). Rather than particularly following a guideline of past party expectations, Trump deviated from the norm and rejected science. Polarization and party partisanship prior to his presidency created the space for Trump to enact his form of governing.

Staying true to his promise to disrupt the swamp, Trump's actions demonstrated a move away from party loyalty to a form of hero worship. Future studies have the potential to explore how his actions will shape the future of the Republican party. As Rovny et al. explained, "parties respond to exogenous shocks and incorporate new issues into their issue portfolios" (p. 8). With

the shock from the coronavirus and the unconventional methods of the parties' leaders, the future of the Republican party will be shaped by how the issues exposed by Trump are rhetorically created.

Trump's popularity with his followers appeared to be above party loyalty. Morris examined county-level support for Trump and the spread of COVID-19. He found "counties more supportive of Trump saw a trajectory of increased cases and deaths in July and August" of 2020 (p. 2412). He hypothesized the increase in cases were connected to political party polarization, and lumped support for Trump to the Republican party. "This set of cultural norms appears to have impacted the trajectory of the spread of COVID-19 in places with larger number of Republicans- that is, places more supportive of Trump" (p. 2428). While Morris was on the correct trajectory, his connection of Trump to the party missed a key feature.

Kaushal, Lu, Shapiro, and So argued "support for Trump above and beyond partisanship drove public attitudes capturing skepticism toward COVID-19" (p. 1). This move toward leadership over the party demonstrates an increase in contested memory. As Kaushal et al stated "Trump's hold on voters within and beyond the Republican Party provides evidence that leaders surpass the role of parties in influencing public opinion" (p.1). This is not to say that all non-Trump supporters, regardless of party, saw the pandemic in the same way. Instead, support for Trump exceeded traditional party support.

"From the start of the pandemic, public attitudes toward COVID-19 were deeply divided along party lines as well as among Trump supporters and opponents. These gaps widened over the next 5 months. Importantly, at the start of the pandemic, non-Republican (mostly Independents) Trump supporters were generally more skeptical of the pandemic, less likely to practice social distancing, and more racist than Republican Trump supporters, suggesting that the

reach of Trumpism on COVID-related attitudes advocated by President Trump went beyond partisan divide” (p. 2).

Trump as a politician has always been a polarized figure. When faced with an external threat in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic, he repeatedly went against common practice. His rhetoric and actions increased polarization, and while even his supporters “increasingly saw Trump’s rhetoric as racist” (p. 13), he was the major influence on his base. Examining the Coronavirus Confessions and the JOTPY reveals how those who submitted their stories felt about Trump. Looking at DICTION in Appendix A.5, Confessions related to Trump are less optimistic ($o=44.58$) and less certain ($c=49.23$) than the JOTPY ($o=49.88$, $c=135.37$).

Overall, most of the stories were critical or negative of Trumps actions and character. Some Coronavirus Confessions dealt with Trump’s inability to respond. “The Presidents response to COVID was infantile. He would have been better prepared if he put aside his pride. I voted for him too.” On top of this, Trump’s lack of trust in science created an even larger gap for science teachers to work around. “I teach science. Virtually or face to face, I need to reinforce that science is real and not made up as the Trump Admin does.” A journal entry summarized Trump’s and by connection the government’s response, “All Trump and our government has done was to ignore the citizens’ death and provide false hope.” These stories demonstrated a division between citizens and a government led by Trump. There were at least two conflicting views of how to manage the pandemic and the country as a whole.

Trump’s actions were often criticized for lack of attention to health and a focus on money. In the Coronavirus Confessions, “I’m worried Trump will force people to return to work too early. He might think it’s okay to sacrifice lives for money...I don’t.” In the JOTYPY, “President Trump refused to extend quarantine or even fully enforce it due to the economic instability it

proposed.” Yet, one confession stated, “I’m a micro business owner. Income down 70%. I got an EIDL loan which will outlive me. Covid is less terrifying than Trump.” This provided a view that Trump’s response, regardless of focus would be more damaging than the course of the virus. This view was echoed in the JOTPY by an author who was worried about Trump’s rally in Tulsa Oklahoma near Juneteenth. “His administration has to understand the tinderbox they are laying fuel for. I simply don’t understand.” The most dangerous thing for a society in the midst of a health pandemic (COVID-19) and a racial justice movement (BLM) is a leader with seemingly no understanding of either.

Other critiques of President Trump focused on his laissez-faire demeanor toward COVID deaths. In the Coronavirus Confessions, “I feel like the President thinks I am disposable.” “Coronavirus surges in many states and Trump does NOT care if you live or die.” This was echoed by another confession that pointed out that “the president played ‘Live and Let Die’ at rally. Sickening.” Also in the confessions, “I feel angry that our president doesn’t care what happens. My sister had the virus, she said it was like an elephant sitting on her.” From an outside perspective, one entry, submitted from Sweden, called Trump “a bear in a trap, enraged, striking out blindly, snout spraying foam and blood with every snarl.”

Recalling the memory of COVID-19 from these archives, we must not forget the charismatic/enigmatic hold Trump had over his supporters. While their voices may not be heavily represented in these archives, they help to demonstrate the partial and contested characteristics of memory. In multiple confessions, the confessors lamented/raged over friends or family members, and Trump supporters in general, who were under Trump’s influence.

A confession shared, “This virus is going to kill some of my relatives. They think this is a hoax to discredit Trump. Many of them have health issues.” Adult children of parents who

supported Trump shared stories of how their parents acted. “Moved in w/ my Boomer parents who think hand sanitizer & Trump will save them. I’m a single working mom. Idk where else to get help.” “My Dad said he felt sorry for my 3 yr old twins that i was their mother because i dont like Trump. I blocked him.” In the JOTPY, one husband sadly shared his “wife lost multiple elderly family members to COVID because her parents believed the rhetoric spread by Donald Trump and those like him. Five years of dealing with racist, sexist, homophobic and transphobic bigotry being the political norm, and eight months of a pandemic in the heart of one of the largest science denying states in the country led to this moment of desperation, where all I could do was blindly bake and write to the nervous energy out.” This entry pointed out the hopelessness that surrounded family members who were not just living through a pandemic, but combating the cult like mentality of relatives.

The hopelessness persisted when the parents shared stories about their adult children. “I own my home, but my son, wife and family live here as they are broke. They worship Trump and won’t see it’s his fault. Maddening.” “This virus and this president have caused a split with my son who has my grandkids... it’s heartbreaking all the way around!” Parents attributed to providing and keeping their children safe, no matter the age, were faced with the idea that their own children may be putting their lives in danger because of their belief in Trump. Furthermore, in the second example the parent became isolated from her grandkids due to inconsolable views on the president.

Going beyond family, the contested view of COVID-19 presented by Trump disrupted friendships expressed in the Coronavirus Confessions. “I may drop my best friend of 20 yrs since believes the Trump/Repub BS that the virus is overblown, and he knows I had it bad.” Even employees anonymously spoke out about their bosses. “Glad I’m working. Hate hearing my

Trump-loving, conspiracy theory & deep-state believing boss spout twisted views on virus.”

“We’re lucky enough to live in a rural community - my boss subscribes to Trumps every word putting me and my coworkers at risk!”

Perhaps the most illustrative and telling confessions of the rage some people felt, came in the confessions focused on Trump supporters in general. “I hope that ALL Trump supporters get COVID-19 & are close to dying from it that it wakes them up enough to vote him out of office.” “I wish all the Trump fans who don't take this seriously would get seriously ill or die of COVID-19 to teach them all a lesson.” These last examples demonstrated an extreme view that showed how enraging the perspectives have become. Those who created these confessions know that COVID-19 is a deadly virus, yet they still take the step to wish this fate on others just because of the ‘hero’ they worship. In a sense, it equates to the feudalistic reasoning that killing citizens punishes the king. Those who shared these confessions are angry that others are putting lives at risk, yet they remove any form of moral objectivity by wishing risk and ill will towards that group. What really is going on is they are afraid of the unknown and are lashing out at an easy target, provided by their own leaders in power. This is typical scapegoating as explained by Burke (1962a), “thus the scapegoat represents the principle of division in that its persecutors would alienate from themselves to it their own uncleanness. For one must remember that a scapegoat cannot be ‘curative’ except insofar as it represents the iniquities of those who would be cured by attacking it” (p. 406). It is easier to blame Trump and his followers than to ask questions of their own leaders. This is the fear of forgetting and not accepting partiality. People rather accept the creation of a scapegoat to expunge their own guilt, than work together to educate.

While Trump support may have a significant factor in COVID-19 spread, political leaders underneath him, by party affiliation, received some blame. Hill, Gonzalez, and Davis (2020) acknowledged how Trump support impacted population mobility, but also found states with Republican governors were slower to adopt shelter-in-place and public health recommendations. This is partially due to misinformation propagated by Trump and other high-ranking Republicans. One suggestion Hill et al made to negate misinformation is to have well-known Republican leaders speaking about the importance of public health guidelines” (p. 799). They explained that Republican governors responded differently to COVID-19 based on their mix of voters. It is important to see what governors are being talked about and for what reason in the Coronavirus Confessions and the JOTPY. The data from DICTION showed even lower optimism for governors in the Confessions, but also lower levels of certainty in both databases. This is perhaps due to the increase language of hardship for governors who are dealing with an unpredictable president and national government.

One way to analyze archives mentioning governors is through a keyword evaluation. Freden and Sikstrom (2021) connected keywords with “both strength and direction of voters’ view” of political leaders. While their study was focused in Europe, the idea of keywords holding meaning is relevant to how people remember governors. Positive keywords associated with governors provides hope, while negative keywords demonstrate a view of government failure, which can lead to what Robinson (2022) labeled as institutional trauma.

On the positive side, confessions focused on thanking their governors for implementing mitigation policies. There is a generic example, “THX to the governors & health officials who care enough about their citizens to impose restrictions.” As well as the state specific examples, “The state of New Mexico will continue remote learning next week. I am very thankful for

Governor Lujan Grisham.” And even one in between, “Thank God for a Democratic governor not forcing students and teachers back to school if not safe.”

The types of examples for negative confessions mirror the positive, with people being angry at governors for not doing enough to stop the spread of the virus. In the generic realm, “I feel like a sacrificial lamb. Some of my colleagues will die before school boards and governors are willing to risk closures.” In the state specific, both Colorado and Florida were mentioned. “Colorado Covid cases are surging and the governor refuses to issue stay at home order again. I don’t understand.” “I’m a teacher in Florida. Our governor has decided to make school children and teacher his ‘canaries in the coal mine.’ Help!” “I’m a guidance counselor in Central Florida. Governor clueless! Scared and furious I have to go back and have no say in the matter.” The in between example groups Trump with the governor of the state. “Mad as hell at the Donald and my governor for prioritizing the economy over me and my wife’s lives.”

In the JOTPY there were more diverse entries. While the bulk of the entries provided examples of state mandates issued by Governors from multiple states and territories, one entry described how their family “ignored guidelines by Democratic governor Newsom, who doesn’t even seem to be able to follow his own rules.” The author goes on to talk about their Thanksgiving gathering and the amount food their mother prepared. At the end, they made a point in saying “no one in my family has got sick from the gathering.” This example served as a comparison for the confessions that applauded democratic governors’ guidelines. While others bunkered down, this family elected to celebrate, and the author pointed out there were no connected cases. The experiences from each side, one locked down to save lives and the other gathering to celebrate holidays, changes how they viewed the associated information that leaders provided.

5.2 Truth

When different sources have different truths, people follow the truth from the source they trust. The erosion of truth or the lack of agreed truth has opened room for conflicting “facts.” As Biesecker (2018) has noted, “post-truth is the economization of truth,” the marketability of information to persuade and control an audience. Gil and Catano (2019) explained the post-truth era in this way: “what often counts in this sphere are not so much facts but the feelings that are generated by the news and the attitudes of the recipient who follows it” (p. 251). Emotions and audience probability overrule science.

Tekobbe and Buck (2022) argued the polarization of our time has “the mass media focusing largely on pathos,” a dynamic that runs deeper than Trump and includes issues over “power, privilege, white supremacy, political consolidation, and deliberate intent.” COVID-19 has brought out each of these issues. Vivian (2018) has argued it is not the loss of truth that establishes the basis for exertion of power, but “by simultaneously undermining opportunities for pluralistic deliberation over conditions of truth itself and promoting extra-deliberative versions of truth (based on biological supremacy, historical destiny, or cultural heritage” (p. 416). Confessions and journal entries that ask what is true demonstrate the disappearance of clear deliberation as it has been traditionally understood.

In one journal entry, the writer explained they used to follow the media for information, but lately with current events they do not know what is true or not. When it came to voting, they struggled. They did not want to give up their right to vote, but they also felt like they did not have access to enough true information. If people cannot access the places where truth is debated, then they are relegated to accept information based on their own biases.

Parment and Paul (2020) argued the COVID-19 pandemic was the first post-truth pandemic, differentiated by “not simply deceptions and erroneous statements but rather a deep skepticism about the very idea that truth exists” (p. 945). When faced with true information, some people treated it as false. While there are always some people who will deny truths, what makes the COVID-19 era particularly interesting to study is the high level of people who passed lies as truth and denied facts. Parment and Paul explained political leaders, celebrities, pundits, and some health officials have downplayed or spread rumors about the virus. “This cacophony helps explain why spring breakers partied on Florida beaches while cities elsewhere shut down” (p. 945). The spread of lies combating the truth leads to dueling realities; one based on rhetorical creations and the other on science backed mitigation.

Borah, Austin, and Su (2022) studied the connection between sources examined, literacy variables, and political ideology and misinformation. Their results showed “that conservatives, younger individuals, information gathering from social media, conservative media use, and information gathering from Trump were positively associated with COVID-19 misperceptions” (p. 17). Comparatively, gathering information from the CDC and other trusted science backed organizations was inversely related to misperceptions. To help reduce political biases, they argued “a need to facilitate more exposure to alternative viewpoints to counteract the echo chamber of misinformation that conservatives appear to trust regardless of self-reported media literacy” (p. 1). In another study to understand how to reduce misinformation, Cotter, DeCook, and Kanthawala (2022) examined social media platforms’ attempt to mediate false information. They found that social media companies focused on labeling mis/information rather than dealing with the structural underpinnings that allowed misinformation to be spread. They argued “platforms could devote resources to identifying communities and influencers driving adjacent or

related conversations about conspiracy theories” thus helping to reduce the “super spreader infodemic events” (p. 11). They went on to explain that as US based companies, the social media platforms have an obligation to help stop the spread of misinformation, especially with the US being a major distributor of false information.

Siapera (2022) went into the structural policies of social media platforms. Borrowing a term from Foucault, Siapera described the policies and practices as “an apparatus of security: a form of governance which focuses on circulation with the objective to regulate the flows of contents in ways that sustain the platforms” (p. 15). Labeling something as misinformation and stopping the spread does not target what caused the creation of misinformation. To help stop misinformation, Siapera pointed out there needs to be a focus on production. “Paying attention to production may help identify this wider and more deeply embed pathology that then reaches individuals as form of dislocation: it is society that has the problem which then manifests itself in certain individuals or communities” (p. 15). Social media platforms cannot alone be held responsible to heal society. Instead, it is the community and society itself that must work towards decreasing the production of misinformation.

Exposing biases in misperceptions and working towards a unified truth of the pandemic is important to stop the abuse of misinformation to create division. Cabanes (2022) explained how “racially tinged Covid-19 digital disinformation” played a role increasing anti-Chinese sentiment in the Philippines. Using shared narratives and an understanding of media consumption, digital disinformation created a myth that rang true with groups in the Philippines. Tying in existing narratives helps to reduce critical engagement with the misinformation. After seeing stories that they can relate to, the audience is primed to follow the messaging of whoever controls that site. In the United States, this helps to explain the attachment of Trump supporters

and their non mitigating actions, along with the lack of representation in digital archives. The stories of Trump ring true for them, highlighting the common man and the fight against corruption. This leads to Trump's and other misinformation believed over organizations that have been labeled as out of touch with the common person. Rather than seeing science as truth, prior narratives have set the stage for science to be a conspiracy. Greenspan and Loftus (2021) explained "exposure to misinformation can have significant impacts on people's thoughts, actions and memories" (p. 8). Overtime, narratives of misinformation become used as justification for beliefs and actions. Attempts to archive the experience of the pandemic from a Trump supporter angle are often met with disgruntled conspiracy theories or a focus on the detriment of the economy and not the health crisis.

Remembering COVID-19 as a post-truth pandemic highlights the partiality of memory. "Post-truth rhetorics are also defined as having an ambivalent orientation toward facts that is weaponized against historically excluded people to perpetuate that exclusion and maintain the power of the status quo" (Tekobbe and Buck). The ignoring of the structural issues creating health disparities in the pandemic demonstrates a rhetorical move to silence the minority voices.

While memory has always been partial, and minority voices silenced, partisan truth has exacerbated preexisting conditions. "The barrage of false information has helped to erode trust in public health leaders and hinder efforts to contain the pandemic" (Parmet and Paul, p. 945). When truth is no longer agreed on, trust becomes hard to maintain.

5.3 Trust

Trust fades away when citizens become critical of their government leaders. When leaders are accused of actively spreading misinformation and conspiracy theories, the public trust in the very institution built to serve them disintegrates. With division, comes confusion. Unclear

directions from authorities leads to mistrust and leaves room for polarized leaders to sow dissent and fear. Without clear instruction, people seek out authoritative voices, regardless of the truth. Most often, these voices come from within their own echo chambers, creating unity within the small group but perpetuating division as a whole. In times of uncertainty, people gravitate towards sources they trust.

With a lot of articles connecting to media communication and health communication, risk and crisis research tends to cover how health events are communicated with the public. Ratzan's (2013) editorial illustrated the importance of taking a health diplomacy approach to communicating about the threat of new diseases and viruses. He argued "it is not that the facts of what we know are necessarily wrong, as scientific knowledge and the threat of emerging disease is incremental, but how they are communicated at each point becomes a challenge" (p. 757). Lee (2014) took a strategic approach to looking at news frames of the H1N1 pandemic. Using the Singapore Ministry of Health and The Straits Times, they found six framing variables predicting news coverage. "News releases are more likely to be selected for news coverage when they focus on a preventive frame, rely on thematic framing, use emotion appeal, have a positive tone, are framed as gain, and are issued during an outbreak situation" (p. 294). Combining news frames and crisis stages, Pan and Meng (2016) studied news frames of the swine flu throughout three crisis stages; pre-crisis, crisis, and post crisis. They found that different news frames were used based on the crisis stage. From their findings, they suggested that "the relationship between the government and news media should be mutual and cooperative during crisis management processes" (p. 104). This would in turn provide more relief to the public and an increased sense of trust in government actions taken to control the crisis.

Extending the area of Risk and Crisis communication, *Pandemic Rhetoric's* is the name given to the project led by Øyvind Ihlen, located at the University of Oslo. In collation with other universities in Norway along with Denmark and Sweden, the project seeks to understand the connection of public trust in media and risk and crisis communication surrounding pandemics. "A central objective is to study the notions of ethos and the rhetorical situation where legacy media lose ground to social media. Short pathos-filled arguments might have better sway than the relatively long and complex ethos- and logos-arguments traditionally used by public authorities" (*Pandemic Rhetoric*). While the *Pandemic Rhetoric* project is still early on, their initial research is in line with Robinsons' institutional trauma.

Robinson explored how decreasing trust can create institutional trauma which can impact views on democracy itself. In an extension of Alexander's term, Robinson "takes the theory of cultural trauma in a new direction by applying the lens of cultural trauma to both the virus itself and the domino effects on societal institutions" (p. 464). At the center of her work is the erosion of trust in public health, journalism, and democracy. Trust/mistrust is rooted in contestation. It signifies that there are alternative options. The pandemic has increased levels of trauma, and the longer it goes unchecked there becomes a decrease in trust in those organizations connected with the virus. According to Robinson, COVID-19 "heightened the perception that many existing governments, large private bureaucracies, and citizenries are incapable of marshalling the discipline and resources to stem these threats" (p. 465). When people are shown a raging virus that avoids mitigation efforts or when organizations do not attempt to address pertinent issues, people begin to lose faith or trust that that organization is looking out for their best interests.

Koplan (2003) also discussed the importance of government communication during a health crisis. Comparing a health crisis to a war, he predicted that "in this brave new world, daily

public briefings by the CDC director will be as permanent a feature of public health crises as are briefings by the Secretary of Defense or Director of Homeland Security in time of war” (p. 145). During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were repeated press conferences for medical professionals to address the public, the most famous doctor being Dr. Fauci. While this communication was produced, there is a question in how well it circulated or shared in people’s performed memories.

Rhetorical attacks aimed at health organizations raised questions about the legitimacy of those institutions. This is more than an American problem with other noted experiences in Brazil (Robinson, 2021) and in Europe (Roccatto and Russo, 2021; Vasilopoulos, Mcavay, Brouard, and Foucault, 2022). During COVID-19, organizations working to mitigate the virus have been used as political pawns. This “politicization of the pandemic and other threats . . . continues to lead to diffusion of cultural narratives about institutional dysfunction” (Robinson, p. 476). Studying American’s trust in the World Health Organization, Bayram and Shields (2021) argued “partisan attacks on competency may be more damaging than attacks on the integrity and political autonomy” (p. 2325). Partisan attacks are used to rhetorically divide and create mistrust in an organization for the attacker to gain more control over their intended audience. While the WHO is an important institution to combat the pandemic worldwide, Bayram and Shields noticed “trust in the CDC appears more important than trust in the WHO for Americans’ compliance with COVID-19 guidelines” (p. 2325). According to a survey from the COVID States Project, trust in the CDC dropped by 12% in 2020, and by another 5% in 2021. When separated by political affiliation, the data shows Democratic trust in the CDC remained level with only a 3% drop over 2020 and 2021, Republicans’ trust dropped 35%, while Independents were more representative of the average with a total drop in trust of 18%. Examining the CC and the JOTPY for mentions

of the CDC provides a glimpse at how American institutional trauma is rhetorically perceived by the public in their archived memory discourse. According to DIRECTION, memory performances in both archives had higher levels of optimism towards the CDC (CC $\alpha = 45.69$, JOTPY $\alpha = 50.93$) than Trump ($\alpha = 44.58$, $\alpha = 49.88$) or Governors ($\alpha = 43.74$, $\alpha = 50.01$); however, they still range on the low end of the scale.

In one confession, they stated “I am angry CDC guidance for schools lags current science and as a result we are lulled into believing reopening plans (are) safe.” This confession demonstrated a mistrust in the organization and highlighted that the potential politicization of the CDC is slowing them down. Another confession showed how businesses are using the CDC guidelines, “our plant mgmt is using CDC ‘guidelines’ to keep from quarantining ppl w COVID.” This confession points out the confusion and ambiguity of CDC policies. In this confusion, businesses are able to manipulate the guidelines at the expense of worker safety. In some cases, companies even disregard the CDC, forcing workers to decide to leave. “My company allowed me to walk out because the company was ok about disregarding the CDC rules of six foot and wearing a mask.” While this person had trust in the CDC, their company did not. These contrasting viewpoints lead the employ to choose their health over the economic repercussions of being unemployed.

In the Journal of the Plague Year, one entry described how their family was following CDC guidelines because of their dad being at high risk for COVID. “My family and I did not go out and see other people CDC guidelines would be violated.” Due to the risk of a family member, they trusted the CDC to ensure the safety of their dad. While this entry showed a specific guideline that the family was able to follow, all mitigation efforts weren’t so clear. One rural business in Oklahoma explained “we are not given strict corporate or state regulations to

enact. Instead, we are reliant on state and CDC information as well as our own ingenuity of how to best observe these suggestions.” The ambiguity from larger institutions decreases trust in their effort to slow the virus. An entry from Arizona pointed out the governor said, “Arizona would follow the CDC guidelines ‘the Arizona way.’” Essentially the governor passed the responsibility to keep the public safe to the small businesses. In a journal entry, the author reiterated how inability erodes trust, “conflicting opinions abound, with no consistency from our state and federal governments. It’s hard not to long for the days when I trusted Walter Cronkite and thought the government was looking out for my best interests.” This entry not only pointed to government reactions around COVID-19, but to other events happening during the pandemic; Black Lives Matter protests and space launches specifically mentioned. The erosion of trust in the government to handle a health crisis exacerbates mistrust for them to handle other situations including racial inequality and scientific discoveries.

Another confession lamented the cancelling of concerts due to “CDC health restrictions and the threat of the virus.” While this initial quote acknowledged the health crisis, later on the blame is placed on health restrictions, “health restrictions caused many local concert venues to close.” Intentional or not, this rhetorical move shifts focus away from the pandemic and onto organizations working to mitigate the spread. In doing so, it served as an example of institutional trauma. Over time, the virus itself moves to the background and the anger of individuals moves towards the institutions that were responsible for getting life back on track. One teacher stated, “how am I supposed to keep my classroom clean when nothing is on the shelves and I can’t trust the TX govt to provide supplies.” This confession placed anger at the state government for not being able to support their teachers. Multiple other confessions echoed the mistrust in state and local governments to provide the necessary mitigation efforts to keep teachers and students safe.

Trust or mistrust goes beyond institutional trauma. Numerous confessions and journal archives lamented the decrease of trust in their fellow citizens, friends, and family. Continuing the theme of education, another teacher pointed out “I don’t trust the parents in my community to stay home to slow the spread of the virus.” For some teachers, the problem is even closer, “75% of adults (at school) had no masks or wore them improperly. Can’t even trust colleagues.” Outside of the school, one confession described the anxiety of wanting to go back to church, “I want to go back for service, but don’t trust members to take virus seriously. Torn. Scared.” Even in a place that supposedly preaches taking care of the most vulnerable, individuals are left to question how much they trust their fellow church goers to actually follow through. Lack of trust is not just an adult problem, one 14-year-old shared their confession about losing “so many people who I thought were my friend and now I only have 2 who I can really trust. Smh I feel so alone.” While all these confessions have the same angle on the virus, they showed a contested pandemic memory. The lack of trust based on others not behaving demonstrated another side that is not voiced in the confessions.

In certain cases, trust is not necessarily connected to the inability of the other to perform mitigation efforts, but because the risks are too great. “It’s demoralizing not to be able to trust people, not because of any personal shortcoming, but because of the potential that one of our health be jeopardized.” This perspective of trust demonstrated how even the memory of mistrust during a pandemic has alternative meanings. While the above confessions mirrored institutional trauma by the knowing misdeeds of the organization or individual, this journal entry relinquishes power. It’s not the any individual’s fault, but it is the times that have put us into a state of mistrust.

Alternatively, to the mistrust, there were a couple journal entries that celebrated or were positively connected to human trust. In one, the author told a story of a bag of beans left out for those struggling to find food. They saw this bag as a selfless act, those who put out the bag “trusted that those who would take the beans would need the food more than they did.” These actions provided a foil to the mistrust stated in the confessions and other entries. A complete picture of the pandemic must include both the good and the bad. Trusting in fellow humans comes down to individual perception. The truth of the pandemic is based on individual experiences.

5.4 Inequality

One person’s truth is not another person’s truth, and who we trust can help shape our world view. This can lead to overlooking inequalities exposed by COVID-19. In a special journal issue focused on the inequality of the pandemic, guest editors Robinson, Schultz, Ragnedda, Pait, Kwon, and Khilnani (2021) argued vulnerable populations are being disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, both in terms of health and economics. Their hope is to increase awareness “of the far-reaching ramifications of the pandemic on vulnerable members of society” (p.1603). As society deals with the pandemic through multiple methods, often times policies are put into place to reassure the fundamental structures and help slow the spread. However, when the structures themselves are already weighted towards one group, new policies enacted just promote the status quo. This sustains a system built on inequalities.

Hull, Stevens, and Cobb (2020) have advocated for “community-engaged research that informs the development of communication interventions designed to address racism.” Noting the inequalities of pandemic policies, access to healthcare, and timely treatment, they argued COVID-19 mitigation must take on the effort to eliminate racism from the health system. Kizito

and Carter (2022) proposed an Epidermal Border framework for studying the “intersections of race and health,” focusing on “how public health discourses produce and reproduce borders . . . to disproportionately impact Black health outcomes.” The public gaze on Black bodies creates a border mechanism that limits access to preventative health measures that gets exacerbated during health crises. Kizito and Carter argued that mitigation policies enacted to stop the spread of COVID-19 privileged those who had the means and opportunity to work at home and stay out of public spaces. Those who had no choice but to be essential carried the most serious stigma. Black bodies who were absent in the societal gaze became hyper visible, reinforcing negative stigmas at no fault of their own.

One interesting note is brought up by Christensen (2022) who discussed the connection of unmasking and whiteness. While Black bodies were seen as deviants for actions outside of their control, “toxic white masculinity’s resistance to masking is an effort to present itself as youthful.” The disparity between the two is telling. One group of people who are forced to work through mitigation efforts are demonized because of the color of their skin, while another group actively chooses to ignore mitigation efforts to showcase their vitality. An epidermal border framework looks past the initial mitigation actions, and identifies the underlying borders rooted in societies rules and norms. One way memory studies can help fight racism is by exposing and breaking down borders in memory performances.

Robinson, Schulz, Ball et al (2021) focused on the second and third-order effects that were triggered by COVID-19. They explained how these effects increased inequalities already present. Those already struggling economically had to deal with increase anxieties and fear around jobs, but fear of losing their jobs and fear of contracting the virus due to being labeled essential. Furthering the discussion on second-level effects, Robinson, Schultz, Wiborg, and

Johnston (2021) found “that the digitally disadvantaged experience greater vulnerability to the secondary effects of the pandemic in the form of increase somatized stress and decreased COVID-19 comprehension” (p. 1721). This connects with the digitally disadvantaged being less likely to distinguish misinformation online. Thus, leading to behaviors and beliefs contrary to mitigation efforts that leaves the individuals at a higher risk. Due to their digital disadvantage, their stories can also be forgotten when memory is performed in digital archives.

The absence of archives that directly discussed inequalities can be explained by Sikka (2022) who argued “that dominant modes of thinking, newsgathering and reporting have curtailed what is reported and obfuscated the complex relationship between race and Covid-19” (p. 9). With reduced presence of health disparity in the media, archived memory reflects individuals’ lack of awareness of these issues. One journal entry explained they noticed “the pandemic has shined a light on all the inequalities in our nation and globally” yet they don’t go further into what inequalities. Instead, they said “I no longer trust the news and today’s journalist. . . what the pandemic and protests have shown me is that I need to educate myself.” The failure of the media to raise awareness of the interconnectivity of racial inequality and health disparities leads to individuals needing to find other sources of information. To combat the silencing of racial health inequalities, media and archived memories must acknowledge the barriers and limitations present in society. While the JOTPY and the Coronavirus Confessions provide a glimpse of the pandemic, they do not encapsulate the entire story. Foiling these perspectives with articles and lived experiences reveals what is silenced and partial. This shows the importance of memory work to help acknowledge and share the stories of those who may not otherwise have a voice.

Polarization before the pandemic created an opportunity for the pandemic to be used as a unifying event. Like war, there was potential for the entire country to come together to support the fight against the virus; yet pride got in the way. Instead of unity, division and bickering centered around who to blame and what is important. While this occurred in Washington or on the screens of representatives, the most vulnerable suffered. The government's inaction/inability to slow the virus increased mistrust and opened the door for others to interject rumors, creating a cacophony of voices. Again, minority communities and others who experience vulnerability were pushed to the back, silenced by the noise. As the death toll rose, from COVID-19 and the police, the absence of productive change was deafening. Black bodies were merged into a number, their presence reduced to a comparable stat. In memory studies we must provide the human angle. Acknowledging memory's partial and contested characteristic helps us understand and attend to the inequalities exposed by COVID-19. We must use this knowledge to seek out minority databases and critically engage with digitally enacted memory performances.

6 DRIFT AWAY

*Beginning to think that I'm wastin' time
I don't understand the things I do
The world outside looks so unkind
And I'm countin' on you
To carry me through*

-written by Williams Mentor, performed by Dobie Gray

As COVID-19 drags on, one might feel the same as Dobie Gray felt when performing drift away. Wasting time with mitigation efforts slow to be enacted. Not understanding the confusion from leaders and health organizations. The outside world is unkind with divisive rhetoric. The only way to get through is by relying on community members to protect each other.

Memories are constrained by the affordances of the historical time. The heavy use of technology and digital archiving has allowed a quicker analysis of COVID-19. It is not just the existence of the platform, but the pervasive use of digital tools integrated into our culture. Social media and other digital platforms have increased the availability of performances to those with a phone. Technology and cultural innovation influence how memory is performed and in turn how it should be studied.

The final characteristic of memory showcases its connection to the past and the fluidity of definitions. Blair et al. suggested, “however one conceptualizes memory, scholars agree that it is historically situated, that both its cultural practice and intellectual status have changed over time and in different societies” (p. 10). As made evident in the prior sections, memory has a history and has changed throughout history. While it often has been the case that our understanding of memory coincides with a major change in technology, it is important to note that some memory scholars do not place technology at the center. Instead, other factors influence a change in how we conceptualize memory, i.e. “theorizations of memory, large-scale events, and so forth” (Blair et al, p. 20). Perhaps a view of memory’s history as fluid is most in line with the entangled

theme. From a rhetorical perspective, we must look at the choices memory scholars have made in conceptualizing memory. Some of these choices are based on life altering events, such as the Vietnam War and perhaps COVID-19, others on a change in theory, post-modernism, and others still based on a change in technology, the digital. To choose one as the central actor in memories history, would reduce memory studies to a reactionary field and do a disservice to its interdisciplinary nature.

Remembering COVID-19 provides a space for reflection. Levina (2022b) explained, “we cannot disentangle our response to the current pandemic from the indifference we show to already existing medical conditions and the structural inequalities that shape them” (p. 109). The historical connection of memory can be used to gain insight for future pandemics to help alleviate the inequalities of the system. As part of mitigating efforts, PSA’s play an important role during any health crisis. Manganello, Bleakley, and Schumacher (2020) studied how the shift of PSA’s to social media impacted reaching audiences. “An ongoing challenge during the pandemic has been reaching audiences in a crowded online environment, establishing authority as a trusted source, and countering misinformation” (p.1). Another strategy to reduce the spread of the virus, is the use of contact tracers. Liebel (2020) argued for a view of contact tracers as knowledge makers. Due to their importance in slowing the spread of viruses, she suggested their training needs a critical look to ensure they are receiving the proper skills to be “positioned as communicators, learners, and professionals” (p. 155). Harkening back to the importance of learning from past pandemics, her hope was to take what we learn from dealing with COVID-19 and apply it to reduce the potential of future viruses. When critically examining mitigating efforts, such as masking or contact tracers, Hull, Stevens and Cobb argued the importance of examining intersectionality and racism in the virus. “By addressing racism as a fundamental

cause of disparities, we will not only mitigate inequities in COVID outcomes, but will also make progress eliminating seemingly intractable health disparities in numerous other domains” (p. 2).

Jandric and Hayes (2020) discussed the project “Teaching in the Age of COVID-19.” The project “presents 81 textual testimonies and 80 home workspace photographs submitted by 84 authors from 19 countries” (p. 1). They explained the work serves as “a form of postdigital dialogue,” incorporating cooperation throughout an isolating pandemic. Due to the abrupt change to teaching, those within the project point out the opportunity that the pandemic as brought to higher education, “we need to grasp this time when people are more open to what might be done, what might change, who they might work with and what the future holds” (p. 5). While the pandemic has brought negative change and countless losses; it also provides an opportunity to enact lasting change to a population looking for a better future.

One approach to deciphering COVID-19’s and the digital cultural influence on memory studies is to address how the characteristics of memory were represented in digital archives created to remember the pandemic. In the introduction, memory’s materiality was discussed as performed on digital archives. The ease of access from anywhere with internet connection allowed people from all over the country and the world to share their memories of the pandemic. Memories materiality became digital. The ephemeral feel of masks and presence was coded into a virtual machine corresponding with the isolation measures put into place to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. With many museums physically closed, the context of the pandemic with the affordances of technology allowed for memory to symbolically be performed through the digital archives. The future of memory studies must contend with digital archives as memory performances. Some universities are already acknowledging the importance of creating specific positions to oversee digital archives and digital memory research.

Chapter 2 examined affects response in memory performance and how sentiment is displayed through digital archives. Using computer mediated forms of analysis to help analyze large data sets allowed for a deeper understanding of how sentiment is performed in digital memory. While feeling is hard to codify, the computer assisted analysis allowed for a more focused discourse analysis. The shift towards digital not only impacts how memory is performed but also how it can be studied. Computer assisted analysis may help with decoding a broad set, but the human aspect cannot be overlooked. Examining the digital archived COVID-19 memory showcases the importance of human analysis when understanding trauma and trauma recovery.

Chapter 3 looked at how memory uses the past in the present. From a COVID-19 influence, it brought up questions of how integrated past pandemics are within our common memory. While direct mentions of past pandemics have been neglected over time, polices and containment methods were created based on prior health crises. One way to understand memory's use of the past in the present can be by the term knowledge poll, where present day actions are influenced by the past without the need to reference historical events. By doing the action, aka masking, quarantine, etc., you are performing a memory of past mitigation efforts. Memory making of past pandemics relied on the ability to gain distance after the event in order to create new strategies to manage future threats. With the rapid speed of memory making today and the reduced distance between event and recollection, memory studies needs to evaluate the role of time and distance. The rhetorical use of the past in the present does not just refer to 100 years ago, but instead some leaders are using the memories of a week ago to propose science is false. The expedited memory making creates more references for others to use and abuse increasing the importance of rhetoric to understand all the available means of persuasion.

Chapter 4 investigated the term ‘normal’ and how memory is connected to identity. COVID-19 changed how society viewed normal, and with it challenged the identity of multiple groups of people. The affordances of technology helped in-person meetings move to the digital. In the move, new identities were formed. Teachers became zoom experts, students became pictures, and those working in-person jobs became essential or unemployed. These challenges to identity opened up the space for renegotiating which led some to echo chambers created to discriminate. Using memories of the pandemic group leaders attracted people by creating an out group to blame for the threat. In turn, these newly established memories of the pandemic were used to create identities for the in-group. Memory has always played a role in establishing and maintaining identity. COVID-19 disrupted the normal and challenged pre-existing identities. Renegotiating identities, based on already affiliated beliefs and the presence of media fragmentation, opened up echo chambers to enhance the ideological chasm. Future memory studies must be aware of how memory performances are used to create echo chambers. Memory is a rhetorical device used to attract individuals and create a group identity. While the digital opens up room for multiple voices, it also allows individuals to be selective. Those facing threats created by COVID-19 sought comfort in the memories that provided a world view that rang true.

Chapter 5 exposed memory as partial and contested. Derived from the creation and extension of polarized groups, memory and trust becomes debatable. COVID-19 increased institutional trauma. Whether deserved or not, people began to lose faith in the government, media and health organizations to contain the pandemic. Mitigation efforts to stop the spread of the virus were debated as necessary for health or detrimental to the economy. Numerous archived memories blamed the other side for the prolonging of the pandemic. Borrowing a phrase from Byung Chul Han, it was a “digital shit storm.” The lack of distance afforded by

digital technology and increased stress from the pandemic created a perfect storm for people to rage. With all these voices, racial minorities and the technology disenfranchised were once again silenced. The heightened awareness of political partisanship silenced the inequalities of the pandemic. Couldry (2022) argued “the main lesson should not be about how the crisis of the pandemic has been interpreted culturally, but about the deep social and economic inequalities which were foregrounded through the experience of ‘getting by’ in the pandemic” (p. 253). Memory studies must take on the mantle of exposing the silencing of inequalities. Memory has always been involved in silencing. COVID-19 and the digital have just created a new way to cover up the other. Even with archivists seeking out minority voices, the cacophony drowns out the rest. As events occur and technology changes, silencing will evolve. Memory studies must evaluate the process of silencing and amnesia and actively work towards providing equal sound space.

Lastly, in this chapter, I have taken the steps to show how memory is evolving and has a history. Through events and technology, our concept of memory changes. Remembering is fluid and so too is our study of memory performances. As the affordances provided by society and technology change, so to do our memory performances. Evaluating the characteristics of collective memory after COVID-19 and the increase of digital archives demonstrates the importance of rhetoric. Rhetoric has always been connected with memory. Today, with the trouble of truth and the disconnectedness between institutions and the people, rhetoric becomes integral in solving the issues of society.

Current research is already showing a connection between COVID-19 and negative mental health. Demonstrated in Reetz (2022), “after two excruciating years and more than a million deaths in the U.S. alone, it is still unclear when, or if, the pandemic will end.” This

uncertainty has increased stress in multiple facets of society. This dissertation offers one understanding of how society copes with the COVID-19 event. It also exposes a memory of a divided nation amid the COVID-19 event that is covering up health and economic disparities. If society can understand how people discuss events, it brings us one step closer to providing resources to help cope with stress and trauma. Like technical diagnostics, it is easier to solve a major problem when it is broken down. The fragmentation within the memories demonstrated a country with multiple focuses and disagreements. Perhaps the largest of which is over which crisis is more important. For the country to come together, it needs to find agreement on where to focus and provide a clear narrative from the top while still maintaining the diverse memories by the people. As Patrick Henry's saying ominously predicts, "united we stand, divided we fall."

The efforts here are not without limitations. COVID-19 is an ongoing event and the databases tasked with collecting memories continue to grow. With public spaces re-opening and access to the internet becoming available for underserved communities, new submissions to these databases may represent a more diverse population. While an initial study into an ongoing event limits the ability to generalize as we encounter the potential end of the pandemic, it does open a path for follow up research to examine how memories added after a year change the themes within the archives. Already in the Coronavirus Confessions the initial tags have changed to include topics that arose later in the pandemic. It will be interesting to see how these new topics changed the tone of the confessions and if pandemic rage persists even with more temporal distancing. Another limitation is the contexts of these two databases. While large, they do not create a representative sample. Archives are reflections of culture and reproduce the human element of the groups they engage. These databases are unique and attract a certain group of people, this limited the types of voices expressed. Specific minority memories along with

conservative leaning memories are far and few between. From lived experience, we know they exist; however, the two chosen archives and the institutions that house them, may not reach a large segment of those populations.

Another issue at the time of research, was dealing with the lack of specific tagging or demographic information of the contributor. While minority voices may have been present, I expected more representation. This reflects on the power of the archive. The absence of fine tagging tools made it difficult to different minority voices, leading them to become overshadowed by the majority. Fortunately, over the course of this project, both databases worked towards improving the richness of data collected. This led to the development of minority specific exhibits. As a natural next step, these new exhibits are great resources to study marginalized voices and their responses to COVID-19.

The continued conversation for memory studies cannot solely reveal silenced memories but must also work towards linking without overshadowing. The minority may have a voice, but they are overwhelmed. We must make room in our databases and research to be critical and selective. Focused studies on minority run and localized databases must be examined to contribute to a true collective memory. Potential options include the MOCA, The Queens Memory COVID-19 Project, and other locally focused archives. By conducting hyper focused research, the discipline as a whole can have a better understanding of how memory is performed.

The steps taken in this dissertation open a framework for these future studies to implement. Digitally archived memory is uniquely accessible for a mixed methods approach. By combining a computer assisted methods with humanistic analysis, the researcher can sift through large sets of data to selectively find memory performances to rhetorically analyze. Together as a discipline we must work towards uncovering COVID-19 memory. As individual researchers, we

can combine our own critical engagement with minority and local archives to supplement broad archived memory. If the specter of past pandemics has silenced minority voices from the memory of past pandemics, we must uncover what is lost and ensure those speaking today are heard.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Selected output from Diction

Appendix A.1 – Chapter 1

Normal range for daily life chat room master variables.

	Activity	Optimism	Certainty	Realism	Commonality
Low	45.7	48.88	42.75	47.88	47.33
High	52.7	57.04	49.8	52.72	51.68

Tones are more casual. Used to compare with the Coronavirus Confessions for general interest.

Normal range for humanities scholarship master variables.

	Activity	Optimism	Certainty	Realism	Commonality
Low	45.9	47.16	43.29	41.3	45.51
High	50.88	51.2	49.88	51.02	51.95

Tones are more academic. Used to compare with the Journal of the Plague Year for general interest.

Appendix A.2 – Chapter 2

Coronavirus Confessions

Sentiment	Total Words Analyzed	Total Characters Analyzed	Average Word Size	Unique Words	Activity	Optimism	Certainty	Realism	Commonality
Negative	44129	237959	4.2	4395	50.29	39.26	270.93	50.84	48.87
Neutral	8436	44889	4.15	1711	45.24	45.27	85.68	49.38	49.22
Positive	16945	89968	4.14	2455	45.82	53.28	118.35	48.56	49.18

Journal of the Plague Year

Sentiment	Total Words Analyzed	Total Characters Analyzed	Average Word Size	Unique Words	Activity	Optimism	Certainty	Realism	Commonality
Negative	69605	394469	4.43	7351	51.05	48.45	347.34	51.81	49.81
Neutral	43549	246582	4.4	5545	50.67	50.17	259.06	51.55	50.24
Positive	24974	140187	4.49	3922	50.3	52.35	173.06	51.42	50.84

Appendix A.3 – Chapter 3

Journal of the Plague Year

File Name	Total Words Analyzed	Total Characters Analyzed	Average Word Size	Unique Words	Activity	Optimism	Certainty	Realism	Commonality
Assignments	795	4883	4.94	323	50.16	51.9	48.35	50.74	50.94
Connected to Past	394	2208	4.49	204	51	50.09	39.85	50.63	52.66

Appendix A.4 – Chapter 4
Coronavirus Confessions

File Name	Total Words Analyzed	Total Characters Analyzed	Average Word Size	Unique Words	Activity	Optimism	Certainty	Realism	Commonality
Normal	993	5247	4.08	400	47.28	45.24	52.49	52.33	55.22
Othering/ Stigma	816	4557	4.4	345	43.69	28.43	53.88	47.7	48.68

Journal of the Plague Year

File Name	Total Words Analyzed	Total Characters Analyzed	Average Word Size	Unique Words	Activity	Optimism	Certainty	Realism	Commonality
Normal	35619	195886	4.37	4436	50.35	49.51	206.87	51.58	50.75

Appendix A.5 – Chapter 5
Coronavirus Confessions

File Name	Total Words Analyzed	Total Characters Analyzed	Average Word Size	Unique Words	Activity	Optimism	Certainty	Realism	Commonality
CDC	66	384	4.68	59	49.66	45.69	51.38	54.58	64.1
Governor	274	1648	4.88	174	50.26	43.74	50.33	52.21	50.79
Trump	652	3550	4.25	326	49.75	44.58	49.23	48.6	52.44

Journal of the Plague Year

File Name	Total Words Analyzed	Total Characters Analyzed	Average Word Size	Unique Words	Activity	Optimism	Certainty	Realism	Commonality
CDC	4312	24647	4.58	1237	50.66	50.93	64.78	52.32	50.77
Governor	7405	44272	4.81	2129	52.17	50.01	92.62	50.58	50.24
Trust	7921	44552	4.47	2021	50.62	48.28	74.66	50.48	49.98
Trump	16668	94904	4.55	3484	50.95	49.88	135.37	52.46	49.58

Appendix B: Sample Artifacts

Appendix B.1 – Chapter 2
Confessions Negative

Miss my students. They're having a hard time. Hate distance learning. Don't get enough support in lesson planning. Sad and scared
Stressed. Worried. Sad. Administration and Board are more concerned with sports continuing than staff safety. Undervalued.
No-win situation. Remote teaching is awful. Returning to school may be a death sentence. Either way, teachers will be vilified.

Why isn't anyone scared for teachers? Do we really matter so little that we don't have a choice? It's beyond frustrating.

I'm a kindergarten teacher. My class size keeps growing. I'm scared to death. Those in authority don't seem to care. Why?!

I am so angry to be forced back into the classroom. Kids and adults will get sick. Admin needs to stop lying that we are safe!

In PA, people are acting like the virus is gone. NO ONE is wearing masks. Restaurant servers not even wearing masks. So angry!

I have not hoarded anything. I am ashamed of how people are acting. I didn't realize how selfish people really were. It saddens me.

I've unfollowed several friends, they think it's a hoax or a joke. They are morons and I have no respect for them. It's gross.

Confessions Positive

I hate to say it but I love working from home. No commute, fewer meetings, fewer interruptions. More productivity. Less stress.

I love being able to work from home. Best work environment ever! Being able to take care of my son and house has become so easy.

My husband got on a train to Florida 10 days ago without saying a word about leaving. I couldn't be happier. Peace bro.

Confessions Neutral

My 82 year old mother is thankfully safe. But boredom and loneliness might kill her. Makes me very sad for her.

Gun shops and liquor stores are not essential! Mad at people who won't stay home. I love my wife of 36 years more than ever.

JOTPY Negative

Midwestern Life

We are a family of four living on a hobby farm in SE Minnesota's Driftless Area. Two kids are home from University. One will miss her graduation event and the other is in Med School doing on-line classes 12 hrs a day. The country internet is slow and nerves are fragile because of that. We've been out grocery shopping numerous times, but haven't seen any friends. It's very isolating. We've let neighbors and friends know we are available to help shop or cook and are cooking food for delivery to a homeless shelter. We have no close family and have heard from almost no one. People here seem to have closed in with their families and churches and excluded much of the outside world. Watching the news, we fear for our country. There seems to be no plan for the future, only empty political hype.

- Jeff Pipes, 59, MN

A Letter From the President

Received in early May, the letter, bearing the president's stamp, informs the recipient of their stimulus payment made possible by the CARES Act; an act of Congress that pumped over \$2 trillion into a once robust US economy now crippled by the coronavirus and the states' subsequent lockdowns. Furthermore, this artifact reflects the virus's growing politicization

during a contentious campaign year, with the incumbent president attempting to revive the US economy despite the grave threat posed by COVID-19's onslaught. Letters, such as this, that were "signed" by the president angered many within the US, as they viewed this as a politically-motivated stunt, thus reflecting the festering political divide that has only been made worse as COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc across the world.

COVID Smells

My family had been fortunate to avoid COVID 19 for ten months. However, in December 2020, that changed. My symptoms began with a minor headache which, on day two, morphed into a minor cough. I was fortunate to never be hospitalized, but on day three, my experience underwent a strange and unexpected change. I began to smell the strong smell, of what could only be described as ammonia. I was once a cat person, and remember the smell of cat urine on a carpet or furniture if left untreated. This smelled exactly like that. My first reaction was to inquire of my family, and no one could smell it but I, which only served to make the experience all the more strange. When everyone can smell the same smell, it's one thing but when only you can smell it you begin to question your sanity. The smell of ammonia was strongest outside and somewhat subdued when indoors. It lasted for one day and was gone the next but it was strong to the point of discomfort.

Diary Entry

The "lay off" Day 7

Whatsthisday, the 307th of April

The clocks changed tonight. I only know because I happened to be awake when they switched. An odd experience. One minute it's 01:59 and the next 03:00. Yesterday was Earth Hour I'd missed that too, but Magdalena remembered and we spent a sleepy hour reading by candle and lamplight before heading to bed at 21:15. It's a sort of tradition now.

I missed both of these events because the available bandwidth to process news is simply overwhelmed with Covid-19. For a microscopic virus, it's footprint in the macro world has become gargantuan, undeniable. Even for those for whom denial had become a way of life. I went to bed too early and now I can't sleep, so I'm browsing The Guardian and eating Clementines. We used to call them Mandarin oranges when I was a kid, but in Sweden, they call them Clementines for some reason. The US news is just apocalyptic. That's a word I use far too much, but it really is the only one that fits now. Multiple, simultaneously accelerating sites of infection, the death rate approaching a thousand a day and the federal response remains jerky, incoherent, contradictory. At every news conference, Trump is like a bear in a trap, enraged, striking out blindly, snout spraying foam and blood with every snarl. He seems to sense a looming future that involves piano-wire and a sturdy lamppost on some broad american boulevard. The lunacy is incomparable, without precedent in my lifetime. We are watching the Suez-cide of an empire in real time.

In Sweden, things remain comparatively calm, but the undercurrent of concern is electric. We all feel it. We all know the exponential curve is on the way for us too. Our own local "Empire", the EU, is under tremendous strain as well, but here at least the causes remain pedestrian and institutional: the predictable outcome of a deliberately weak central authority rather than some bloated Nero. When this is over, we need to take a closer look at that.

The house is cold – I've turned off the electric heating as spring pushes the temperatures higher, but it's 0 degrees out there – so I creep down to start a fire. This is a delicate business at 03:30 in

the morning or 02:30, whatever. The point is, it's the middle of the night, and starting a fire tends to be a noisy obtrusive business, what with the roaring blaze, cast iron stove and so forth. I manage to get it just right, a minimum of metallic pings and ticks, the air flow turned down low to throttle brighter flames but not the coals. Satisfactory. I get back to writing.

We've been in voluntary lockdown for about 2 weeks now. The first week was just a conventional work from home and then the layoff came. That was week 2. Today/Tonight/This morning, we are heading into week 3. That doesn't mean we don't do anything and I'd planned a series of activities with a minimum of social interaction for Saturday. Two things actually, a trip to hand stuff in to the 2nd hand place (Vinden which literally translates as Attic) and the open air recycling center. The fruits of a week with too much time on my hands. To that we've added a trip to ICA Maxi for a final round of supplies buying.

The handoff at Vinden was perfect. There were some other people dropping stuff off, but we waited in the car for them to finish and then dumped our stuff. Eight bags of assorted clothes, utensils and older electronic odds and ends.

Social interactions? Zero. Then we headed to Maxi.

It's dawning on me that this isn't ideal. I've had misgivings about heading into an enormous shopping center in the middle of a global pandemic. Shopping should really be done only during off peak times and Saturday morning is about as on peak as you can get. This is feeling more and more like an avoidable error. I clutch my hand sanitizer and pull on my gloves. However, when we finally pull into the parking garage I'm encouraged. There are very few cars.

We don't need that much stuff, so instead of a trolley we get one of those rolling baskets and head in. There are plenty of people about, but Maxi (as the name suggests) is very large. It has acres of floor space and I can immediately see that people are distributed for maximal social distancing. There is a weird synchronicity to their movements, as if everyone is generating a repelling magnetic field, they slide past each other with meters of clearance. Even when people are speaking to each other or staff, they seem to be standing on either side of a 2 meter gorge. We pinball our way to the cat food (these goddam cats will be the death of us), traversing a wide arc through pet toys and obscure cleaning products, it's a very lightly trafficked part of the store and we meet no one. Then down into fruit and vegetables to pick up oranges, clementines, apples and bananas. I read somewhere you can freeze fresh fruit and I want to try it. Magdalena has more practical goals in mind and selects the ingredients for a salad.

In the fruit and veg section we actually bump into our handyman, Lars. Not literally of course. He has a heart condition and we don't want to kill him, so we stand either side of the gorge and shout pleasantries. Then onto dairy for milk (reason number two, after cat food, we are here at all) and two big plugs of cheese.

Then I decide I want to get a loaf of freshly baked bread, but it's a dilemma. No packaging. If I touch the bread with my gloves, anything on the gloves will transfer and then I'll shove that material into my stupid fat face when we get home. I opt to remove the gloves, sanitize, pop the bread into the bags provided, then put the gloves back on. A month ago this aberrant, peculiar behavior would have attracted stares. Today, not the merest ripple of interest. The world has moved on. We head to the check outs.

They are well manned and we immediately find one with a single shopper finishing up. I realize then we should have self-scanned all this crap. Now the checkout person is going to touch all our stuff, breath on it and so forth. While they contaminate everything I'm blipping my card. The blipping is great because you just hover the card over the reader. Nothing actually touches anything. You still have to punch in the code on the keypad (I shudder at this even though I'm

wearing gloves) but the whole business is so much superior to the epidemiological nightmare of handing physical cash back and forth.

Uuurgh. Cash. Filthy lucre. What a mad unsanitary idea cash is. Or more correctly in Sweden, was. Another big plus in Sweden's fight against the spread of the virus. Cash is no longer king. It's not even a local warlord and all its Statues were pulled down years ago.

We head out to the car, sanitize, and home.

Social interactions? Two.

covid and me

Last year when things got closed in California I got pulled over because i was past a curfew that they set. It was really dumb since I was on my way home anyway. Closing off the roads for a virus is not the way to do it. He let me go with a warning but the whole situation was not needed. I was not speeding or driving bad either. A huge waste of time but other then that nothing abnormal happened to me during covid. Its been super boring but we all have to do our part and keep people safe. After I went home I told my parents about it and they just told me to not drive so lae. In conclusion I learned to not break covid rules since those are the ones the government actually cares about

Covid

one upon a time there was a virus that was new and dangerous. Plagued by fear, the US issued a self-quarantine and limit of social encounters with other people. this angered many people, but it was very necessary. my family is being torn apart by this and I honestly would rather get coronavirus than do this for another month or something. its ridiculous. My parents would freak out at dinner every night because Im not living up to their expectations that seem to have risen during this worldwide state of panic and fear, while I'm getting yelled at for not wanting to set the table or something like that. also, they keep putting time limits on everything I do related to technology; I'm honestly amazed they haven't figured out how to put a list on my school issued Chromebook. once again, ridiculous. I cant believe they expect me to constantly be in a productive state during the worst year of my life. even if after today, everything was sunshine and rainbows, I would still look back on 2020 with the worst taste in my mouth imaginable. ridiculous. my parents tell me I'm going to tell mt grandparents about his, but really, as soon as it ends, I'm going to do my best to forget about this, but It wont be easy, that's for sure. ridiculous. every day, I do that same thing. wake up, shower, school, lunch, moar school, dinner, boredom , sleep, repeat. And i resent almost every single minute of it. Only on the weekend can I feel a sliver of happiness and contentment, only until my parents badger me about responsibility. Give me some time to myself, for god's sake.

JOTPY Positive

Fear of the Unknown

Dealing with the coronavirus, I now appreciate the outdoors and what I previously considered daily hassles have become beautiful memories. I have become more patient as the unsurety of the situation is intense. We are left wondering when public institutions will open or merely when we can step outside the house without worrying about the six-foot distance with others. The initial shock and denial have metamorphosed into solidarity among communities and humankind.

Whereas otherwise we would have ignored the part of our routine in which we communicated with others, we now felt a longing for that same one-minute interaction. The minute-by-minute

increase in deaths instilled fear in the hearts of many and individuals were living on the edge. It was fear of the unknown and desperation for an end to this extended period of isolation. The most significant change I am noticing due to this pandemic is that people have mellowed down. People have put their fast-track life on pause, specifically New Yorkers, and are waiting out the storm to pass. During the pre-quarantine life, not many would have paid attention to the needs of their elderly neighbors. However, the current situation has encouraged everyone to be on the lookout for anyone who needs help. People have become more sympathetic and I envision the same of the post-coronavirus world. The world will change in the future as a result of this pandemic as everyone will become more cautious, constantly monitoring the littlest of changes in our health. People will think twice before touching their face or a seat on the bus. Ultimately, I envision a post-pandemic world to be more sensitive and informed.

Sophomore undergrad

Beauty of Boston

Arriving as a freshman at Northeastern University, I found myself allured to the urban beauty of Boston. In these times it can be observed that the inhabitants of Boston are fewer, mostly at home, wear masks, and have totally changed their way of life. However, despite the pandemic, Boston's urban scape and landscape remain unhindered in its growth, development, and display. The backdrop beauty of the city is appreciated in these difficult times and keep its inhabitants - including myself - resilient and to press on.

JOTPY Neutral

The Coronavirus Diaries

By Adolene L. Fowler

An account of the Coronavirus 2020 pandemic from a 14 year old.

Small Businesses Shut Down

Quarantine Day 9

Today Governor Murphy of New Jersey declared that all small unnecessary business shut down indefinitely. This includes bookshops, churches, stores, and any entertainment places. The decision could have been and still could be a very detrimental thing for small businesses. Small businesses already have financial issues and this just makes them worse. Without any income or donations this could prevent support of the business and paying of employees. We can only hope for the best for these little businesses in the hard time.

Lights Go Out on Broadway!

Quarantine Day 10

On March 9, 2020 all Broadway theatres and shows shut down and posted until an indefinite April 12, 2020. Although it is postponed to a certain date it is indefinite due to the increase of the pandemic. This is a good yet bad thing. It is good because the actors get a break which means when Broadway's lights turn on again then their voices will sound as good as their first opening. The con is limited runs such as Beetlejuice and Mean Girls. Each had actors that were going to be leaving at the end of March and they do not want to renew their contracts which means that they only performed once on Broadway, one two show day. When the lights return to Broadway it will be a fantastic day.

School Canceled!

Quarantine day 11

Boy things are getting bad, today, March 16, 2020, Governor Murphy canceled school for the rest of the school year. All schooling for the rest of the 2019-2020 school year will be conducted online. It will not be good for slackers but it certainly is a good decision for the circumstances. Maybe the whole school year did not have to get canceled though, it could have been indefinitely such as Broadway. The kids it is sad for are the seniors. Most of them worked hard for four years and now they will not have a senior prom, or get to spend these last few months together. Let's hope that the internet does not crash due to online school!

Joking Around

Quarantine Day 12

One big part of society as a person in the 21st century is social media. On social media there have been two responses to the pandemic. People either panicking, whether or statistics or theories it is undecided. Or people are joking about, creating jokes that would make the virus itself laugh. As a person who is indifferent to both sides, I can say viewing both are funny. After all why not joke about a pandemic that our children might ask us about.

What's the deal with toilet paper?!

Quarantine Day 13

When the virus first started spreading it was not that much of a concern but since the rise of concern has started, so has the shopping hoarding. People went in crowds to grocery stores, and what was the first thing they purchased? Toilet paper, you heard it folks, toilet paper. Now why that is the case, no one knows! Not even the people purchasing it! There was a theory that the toilet was getting purchased for preparedness in a supposed asteroid hitting earth in April 2020, but no asteroid was found. Now, teenagers have just come to the conclusion that it is to be prepared for all the food people are eating in quarantine.

Celebrity Awareness

Quarantine Day 14

With a pandemic it would be expected that people be ill, including celebrities. A lot of celebrities have unfortunately contracted the disease. Including Broadway stars Aaron Tveit, Terrence McNally (rest in peace), and chef Floyd Cardoz (rest in peace too). As one can see some have even died because of it. Then there is rapper Cardi B raising awareness to not treat the virus as a joke. And lastly climate activist Greta Thurnberg who contracted it with her father on a tour of Europe. All these sick or well celebrities want to get across as their point is to not joke all the time about a serious disease.

Try to keep it light

Why can't we all try to have a little fun despite living through a pandemic. As an employee of a large liquor retailer I think that I come into contact with more people than average amidst the quarantine. Despite being at risk due to my asthma I have never really felt scared to go to work and interact with lots of people. I have seen this situation bring out the good and the bad in people but try not to pass judgement as I don't always know (or really care for that matter) what the customers are going through. But as I think about the most memorable experiences, they're predominantly good ones. I remember one customer who used a jock strap as a face mask. I hope it was clean. I've heard people trying to joke around and keep the mood light. Overall I have been surprised by the people I interact with for the most part.

Borders

The way covid has affected me has been through seeing my family in Canada. Each year my family travels from Akron Ohio to Ontario Canada so we can see my mom's family. My dad's side lives in Akron so we see them a lot, but it is hard to travel to see my family in Canada sometimes. Covid just made it that much harder. Clearly traveling up there in the middle of the epidemic in the spring would be a bad idea so that already took away one of our three trips out of the year. Then halfway through the summer before we were thinking about going up to our cottage the borders shut down. That really put a damper on things because now two of our trips were cancelled. At this point it has been a little over a year since I have seen my family and that is unprecedented in my lifetime. Finally, as Christmas was approaching, we had hopes that covid would be handled by then, but the borders remained closed and the cases and deaths kept rising. This was upsetting because I was looking forward to seeing my family at least once in 2020 and those dreams collapsed. When we go up to see my family at Christmas time it normally starts off as the first few days are catching up with each other. I love to tell them my stories and they all love to hear them. We then proceed to relax the next few days by going out to lunches with everyone and then making dinner at someone's house. Things can get pretty wild once the people of age start drinking. We have had many karaoke nights along with pool parties and barbecues during the spring. They may not go smoothly, but everyone ends up having a great time. I miss goofing around with my cousins who are all younger than me by one to 8 years, so I always am the leader of the group and decide what fun we get up to every night. Often times we end up chilling in their basement listening to music and telling stories after everyone starts to go to bed. Then on Christmas we wake up to a big breakfast and start opening up family gifts. After all the gifts are open it's time for lunch and to start partying again. We then proceed to get dinner ready and then after dinner we go right back to partying. We normally stay another two days and then leave. All in all it is a really relaxing experience and a chance to get away from the world. It really sucks that covid ended up taking that away from me.

Appendix B.2 – Chapter 3

Confession Connections to the Past

There have been plagues and pandemics from the beginning of time. Why does it seem we have learned nothing from any of them?

JOTPY Assignments

Partner Institution, Fordham University

EVENT ID- VART 3030

Instructor- Casey Ruble

“I taught that class when the pandemic began, and there was such pandemonium surrounding the move to remote learning and the archive was so brand new at that point that there wasn't any lesson plan — I basically just told the students to familiarize themselves with the archive and begin posting images etc. of their observances of the world around them.”

- Casey Ruble via email 08/02/2021 4:51PM

Margrethe Horlyck-Romanovsky

Brooklyn College

HNSC 2100

The prompt for my HNSC 2100 class is as follows:

The archive site can be found here: <https://covid-19archive.org/s/brooklyncollege/page/share>

One assignment this semester is for you to reflect on your personal and/or professional experience as it relates to the pandemic. Brooklyn College has set up an opportunity for the BC community to reflect on COVID-19 called A Journal of a Plague Year.

Both during normal times and crises, gathering testimonials about regular people's lives is important for historical records. What gets remembered is what is documented. Therefore "We invite members of our Brooklyn College community—students, staff, faculty, alumni; and residents of our neighborhood, borough, and city—to share stories and experiences about Covid19. As members of one of the most diverse campuses in the world in one of the most diverse cities in the world, our community has important stories to share about this moment for the education of future generations. You can contribute anything you choose to this digital archive." <https://covid-19archive.org/s/brooklyncollege/page/share>

You can choose to contribute text files, photos, videos, art, audio recordings.

The steps of the assignment are listed below. You will complete the submission and export as a pdf/or print the email confirmation as a pdf. It is this pdf file that becomes your submission for this specific assignment.

Share your story with us.

1. Proposed title
2. Tell us a story; share your experience. Or describe the item you are submitting. What does the object or story you've uploaded say about the pandemic, and/or why is it important to you?
3. Upload files here (Use ctrl or shift to select multiple objects in your device's file window.) Enter a URL associated with this object, if relevant.
4. Upload text files, photos, videos, audio recordings
5. Give a date associated with this story or documents.
6. Use tags (separated by commas) to describe your story or documents. For example: Does it relate to a particular neighborhood? Does it relate to a particular aspect of the pandemic: school, work, family, hospital.
7. Drop a pin to map your location
8. What is your affiliation, if any, with Brooklyn College? (e.g. Junior undergrad majoring in history; faculty in the English Dept; human resources staff member; alumni; community member; Brooklyn resident; etc.)
9. If what you are submitting was created as part of a Brooklyn College class, please indicate the course code (i.e., ENG1010) semester, and professor: HNSC 2100, Fall 2021, M. Horlyck-Romanovsky
10. Please choose Creative Commons option 1 or 2 as described in the above Submission Agreement. For more information on Copyright, Creative Commons, and Fair Use, please consult the Brooklyn College Guide "Copyright and Creative Commons."
11. Contributors are required to enter their name and email. We won't publish or share your email. We collect email addresses only so that we are able to contact contributors if we have questions about the submission.
12. Give your name (You can choose for your name to be confidential in the archive, but you do need to leave your name and email here)
13. Give your email address
14. Are you the sole creator of these materials? (If no, please select "Other" and list the names of the content co-creators, their contact information, and the circumstances of how you came to have the materials. IMPORTANT: Each co-creator must fill out this form in

order for the item to be accepted by the archives. However, only one co-creator is required to upload any document.)

15. Your name will be included with your submission unless you click the box "I want to submit anonymously." Check the box if you want your name to remain confidential (your contact info will be visible to administrators but not to the public).

16. CLICK: Email me my submission (THIS EMAIL IS WHAT YOU WILL SUBMIT AS YOUR HNSC 2100 ASSIGNMENT!)

17. If you answered "other" to the question above, list your co-creators here.

KNPR Paper Extra Credit Opportunity

Martha Phelps

May 16 at 10:47am

All Sections

Hi, Rebels.

I hear your upset about the KNPR paper. In response, I have given everyone 5% extra credit on that assignment. (I've done this by lowering the points possible to 95 while not adjusting your score. Since the KNPR paper is worth 15% of your grade – no matter how many points I make it worth – this has the effect of giving you 5% extra credit on your paper. Yes, this really is the easiest way.)

I also offer you the chance for an extra 5% extra credit on the KNPR paper. I'm working with a project involved in chronicling people's experiences and the like during coronavirus. Right now, you and I are living history. We must keep and curate information from all walks of life (rather than just the elite). To get this 5% of extra credit, you will upload your KNPR assignment to <https://covid19.omeka.net/contribution> (<https://covid19.omeka.net/contribution>) with following tags in the "What else would you like to tell us about this contribution?" field: #unlv #psc100 #mlphelps #knpr #stateofnevada #nevada You may also remove all personal information from your paper and upload it anonymously. If you do not want to contribute to the archive, you may write a 250 to 500-word essay explaining the intent and history of this archival project and upload that in place of the screenshot.

TLDR: For extra credit, upload your KNPR paper here: <https://covid19.omeka.net/contribution> (<https://covid19.omeka.net/contribution>) then upload a screenshot of your confirmation page to canvas here: <https://unlv.instructure.com/courses/61456/assignments/676624>

I need to turn in grades soon, so you only have 24 hours to complete this extra credit. I'm here if you have any questions.

Best,

Phelps

PS: I hope you upload many, many things to this archive, such as journals, explanations of what is going on at work, pictures of empty or strange places, interviews with your parents and friends, etc. I would see us represented. It'll help me if you include #mlphelps in everything you upload. I want to make sure the experience of the individual - you - is not forgotten by history.

Colorado Academy, partner, Journal of the Plague Year

Student Prompt, 6th Grade

Eric Augustin, Instructor

Since departing for Spring Break, and not returning to physical school, you have begun Learning From Home and taking classes via Zoom. After 8 days in this "new school" what are your

thoughts, feelings, and emotions on your “new reality?” You may craft any type of reflection statement (prose, poem, etc) that taps into your emotions about the change forced by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Here are some things to start you thinking:

- *What’s different that is good? / bad?*
- *What do you miss or not miss?*
- *When you think of school now, what goes through your mind? Compare that to what went through your mind before the pandemic hit.*

From Sara Greenfield, Seventh Grade Humanities, Lincoln Middle School, Santa Monica, CA
My Post-Covid Hopes and Dreams

Creative Writing Assignment

Teacher: Mrs. Greenfield

English Period: 5

Directions: Use this document to answer the question, “What are my hopes and/or dreams for a post-covid world?”

You can write a poem, a paragraph, a dialogue, a list, a diary entry...anything to express yourself.

JOTPY Connections to the Past

Addie Nofal

11 November 2020

Flu Files

The historical artifact that I chose to analyze was a comic from the Fort Wayne Sentinel on December 7, 1918. The comic, called Bringing up Father in Fort Wayne, depicts a wife, who is wearing a mask during the Spanish Flu pandemic, and a husband who refuses to do so. After the wife throws household objects at him, he eventually goes to get a mask. The husband character, Jiggs, was actually someone who was rough around the edges and did not exactly fit into society’s standards. The wife, Maggie, was concerned throughout the entire comic with “Bringing up” Jiggs to a higher social position. So, it seems that this comic is made to ridicule those who did not want to wear a mask at this time, since the character who is not wearing the mask is seen as uncivil and unrefined. It was published in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where, despite low numbers of flu cases, the Board of Health recommended wearing masks and banned public gatherings to prevent the spread of cases. After there were only a few cases, they lifted these restrictions and recommendations, only for the amount of cases to spike in Fort Wayne. In response to this, city officials made masks mandatory. In fact, one could be arrested for not



wearing a mask. This was around the beginning of December, right around the time this comic was published. However, just days after mandating masks, city officials dropped the mandate, finding it too difficult to enforce. Against health officials' wishes, wearing a mask was no longer mandatory, and the mask mandate was not in place long enough to really make a difference. In Indiana, it seemed that many places at this time were going back and forth on mandates and recommendations. This is similar to the COVID-19 pandemic currently happening in 2020. Mask mandates and recommendations are implemented very inconsistently then and now. Some places only recommend wearing masks out in public, in some places it is mandatory, and in some places recommendations or mandates are non-existent. Mandates are also often dropped when perhaps they should be maintained, just like in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1918. It is interesting to know that the U.S. has not really learned from history, and instead made the same mistakes that made cases spike in Fort Wayne, and death rates rise during the Spanish Flu Pandemic. This comic and its context remind me of criticisms made now in 2020, of people who refuse to wear masks because they believe the pandemic is made up or overexaggerated, similar to Jiggs who says, "It's all bosh! You won't catch me wearin' one!" The reasoning of those who will not wear masks during pandemics seems to be similar even 100 years later

A Prophetic Proposal

I'm a Public History MA student at Northeastern University taking a course about museums. As part of the course, our final project was to design an exhibit about some element of Boston history. Planning for this project began in late January.

Trying to think of some element of Boston history that was relevant to today, I came up with the idea of the 1919-20 flu pandemic. It was 100 years since the pandemic. Boston was the first hit city in the US, and I had seen news about the coronavirus spreading in China, so it felt very topical.

Little did I know how topical the project would become.

Appendix B.3 – Chapter 4

Coronavirus Confessions Normal

I'm a teacher in CA. I am so scared about going back into the classroom. Parents are uncaring about the danger to teachers.

I am a teacher. we are remote learning. The Canvas platform is complicated. kids might not attend. My subject is for live inclass.

I'm a band director who sees 220+ kids on a daily basis normally. I'm scared it's inevitable that I and kids catch/spread this.

Decades of ignoring HVAC issues leave my classroom bad in normal conditions but a Petri dish w/Covid. No windows. Death trap.

What happens if too many teachers get sick or worse die? Who will teach then? Some schools can't even find subs.

For 17 yrs I've subbed in our small district. There are no subs. I covered for 6 different teachers the past 2 days. I'm broken...

I am a veteran, and I feel less safe as a teacher, than I did on active duty. I feel like my life matters less also.

I am sad to see others sad. There is still so much joy, happiness, and peace that can be found in our new non-normal normal.

I don't ever want to return to "normal" with work. I'm more productive working from home I now have 4 hrs/day of my life back.

I hope we normalize working from home for those who are able. No point in sitting in traffic every day.

First time working from home in an 18 year career... I suck at it. Went to the office one-day just for a normal routine.

I lost the man I loved because of this pandemic. I don't want normal yet because that means I'm alone and it scares me.

Our district has 6,200 kids and 800 staff. What 7,000 person business has resumed normal operations without Covid outbreaks?

A school teacher teaching students in the classroom and digital in a dirty building. I will do what it takes to protect myself.

Retired always-underpaid-but-happy teacher. There's not enough \$ in the world that would induce me to teach in this pandemic.

Coronavirus Confessions Othering/Stigma

I will leave nursing after Covid. There are too many selfish people. I am tired of suffering due to people's selfish choices.

I am so over selfish people. I work as a nurse. I have seen such awful suffering and death. People need to think of others.

I'm sad that many of my friends think it's ok to hang out with each other without masks.

Why are people traveling during pandemic!?! Why are we still debating the effectiveness of face masks? It takes collective effort!

I'm afraid I won't see my 96 year old grandmother again. It didn't have to be like this. People are so incredibly selfish.

I'm in Australia and worry I'll never see my parents again, and all because Americans are too selfish to do the right thing.

I am saddened by the friends that don't limit their social interactions and allow their kids to participate in activities.

The biggest surprise and eye opener: people I thought I knew behaving in the most irrational ways about the pandemic and masks.

Instead of saying "must wear a mask" how about "must wear a mask APPROPRIATELY." So simple yet few people take this seriously.

Why am I wishing all these people not social distancing get Covid-19? This is why I never liked group projects. #DoYourPart

2020 has made me hate people, and I hate myself for feeling that way.

Have sensory processing disorder, masks are intolerable, but I'm trapped because I can't trust people not to be jerks about masks.

So many "friends" lost due to not wanting to go to their get togethers. Sorry I value my health and family more than having fun.

I don't even know the person I married. A very selfish individual. WFH is the real pandemic.

My list of friends is going to get a lot shorter... removing everyone who won't wear a mask.

I may drop my best friend of 20 yrs since he believes the Trump/Repub BS that the virus is overblown, and he knows I had it bad.

It scares me that people are going about their lives as if it's safe. It's not. I don't miss anyone enough to risk my life. No One

I wouldn't be as fearful of returning to the classroom if I knew that all of us Americans were in the fight together.

I resigned as of today. Science over politics. ❤️

Boss still shaking hands, visiting clients, & hanging with friends. Then goes to office & elderly parents. Clueless & dangerous.

After a board meeting where parents literally screamed and flipped off teachers for expressing concern, it's clear we are not valued.

I am disgusted by the selfish behavior of people I know, and am going to have a smaller social circle after all of this. Science.

I'm angry at my sister for seeing our elderly father without proper precautions. If he dies from COVID I won't forgive her.

I am tired of being called lazy and selfish because I am a teacher who is scared to return to the classroom. I am not a lab rat.

If you are upset about remote learning, blame the selfish who have run around for months with no masks and no respect for others

Science isn't selfish. Wear a mask.

My sister is an RN. She wears a mask but has been attending parties with dozens of people. How could she be so selfish?

So angry when non-compromised people won't wear masks in public. They are the ones prolonging this pandemic. Selfish jerks!

Horrified that people are not taking this seriously. How selfish can we be? Embarrassed to be an American.

why has mask-wearing become political-this is a public health crisis. Wear a mask!

When I see a group of people I know ... all close together WITH THEIR CHILDREN and not a single mask in sight ... I GET SO ANGRY!

Family and friends who are willfully ignorant and selfish during the pandemic make me feel so angry and discouraged. Humans suck.

At this point, I feel more concerned about the selfish, dangerous behavior of my "fellow citizens" than I do about the virus.

I am really saddened and to find out how uneducated, ignorant, and selfish some of my friends and family are.

I am really saddened and to find out how uneducated, ignorant, and selfish some of my friends and family are.

I am doing OK with Self quarantine EXCEPT I live in Hawaii and am VERY ANGRY that people are still traveling here - So selfish

I had no idea how rude, selfish, and downright hateful Americans are as a group. COVID has brought out the best AND worst in folks

I'm horribly angry at everyone who doesn't take this seriously and is risking the lives of everyone around them. You're selfish.

I'm disappointed that my feelings that people on average are too stupid or selfish to do what's best for everyone has proven true.

JOTPY Normal

Learning online

Learning online is much harder than usual, because it is much easier to not listen. Sure we are learning the same stuff as in school, but all the fun aspects of school disappear during online.

That makes me have no motivation to learn. However I also like it because it gives me a bunch of free time to do art and stuff. Overall i like normal school more.

Fortune Teller

"Towards the end of 2019 if some sort of fortune teller warned me that the COVID-19 pandemic was on its way and the faces of the world would become covered with masks indefinitely, I would tell them that they are crazy.

The spring semester was picking up and the coronavirus had become public news in China for a month or two. One of my closest friends Zach was very interested in Chinese politics and current events. Ever since the first cases were being reported he had warned me that the world was going to change. (He was that fortune teller figure.) I remember us taking a trip to Aldi's so he could stock up on the regular number of weekly groceries. However, he had quite a few cans and non-perishable goods in his cart. He told me he was stocking up for the lockdown that was about to come. Today he's known as the man who saw it coming all along. After that night my fear of the unknown began to grow. I began telling my friends/classmates at Duquesne casually saying the word "coronavirus." They thought I made it up or it was a prank. I explained to them that this outbreak may hit the U.S and affect the entire world. Classes were still in session but as cases started rising in the U.S, the fear of school closing became closer to a reality.

Fast-forward to the first couple days of lockdown. I was becoming extremely overwhelmed adjusting to a new format of learning. I wanted nothing more than to see my friends and have them tell me that everything was going to be okay face to face. The days started merging together and my sense of time was gone. I tried my best to look for the positives but there really are none when the entire world is faced with a potentially life-threatening illness. As months started passing by, I had started to realize that the only thing that would keep me going is patience and a good attitude. Even in the current moment I still long to go to concerts or have big group gatherings with friends or family. A habit I started picking up is whenever I would watch movies or tv shows was pointing out that people were not wearing masks. That's a scary thought knowing that masks have become an external part of our identity.

Let's look at the positives though! I became a lot closer with my best friend by playing Xbox with her. This was one of the only things that I looked forward to, so I played games with her almost every day. I also started playing the piano again after stopping when coming to college. A new hobby I picked up was making meals for my family which was something I found relaxing. I even dyed the front strands of my hair pink from the TikTok trend! All of these hobbies were new beginnings that I don't think I would've initiated if it were not for being in quarantine. As each day goes by, I can only hope that we are closer to "normal" and that the coronavirus can be a thing of the past. I am blessed that my family and friends are in good health and that they stay in good health until the end of the pandemic is in sight."

Pandemic Brand Reviews: I Miss Costco

Costco is my absolute favorite place. It genuinely makes me so happy. Even going during the pandemic makes me happy. However, Costco is definitely not the same as pre-pandemic. Obviously, there are no free samples anymore. This is because it would be a health concern. Although I will miss munch and shopping, I understand that this cannot be expected during a pandemic. As of now, they have the free sample stations up but with just a display of the food. I know that the free sample employees are contracted by Costco. I haven't seen some of the familiar faces recently. This makes me worried, I hope they are still doing okay during the

pandemic. I know that Costco cares about their employees, so I hope they found away for the free sample people to still keep their jobs.

Another change I've noticed in my local Costco is the food court. The food court is Costco's loss leader, the delicious and extremely affordable food lures customers in and in turn makes them shop. Due to COVID, Costco's food court menu has been severely shorted. Fan favorites, such as the \$1.50 hotdog with a free drink, chicken bake, and pizzas are still available. However, they are not the same products anymore. The hot dog, although still delicious, has a smaller bun. The chicken bake is completely different now. It looks more machine-made, and according to my father, does not taste the same. This really disappoints me, as the chicken bake is my absolute favorite item on the menu. The pizzas are only offered in cheese and pepperoni; the combo flavor has been kicked off. This also disappointed me because I only like the combo pizza. In addition, there are self checkout kiosks where you order and pay, then go up to the window to pick up your food.

Other than the food, Costco is still the same. I think life will only be normal again for me when I can go to Costco on the weekend, shop and nibble on the free samples, and still leave room for a chicken bake and combo pizza to go.

Life during quarantine in the Coachella Valley-

Our city is known as the City of Festivals; we host several festivals throughout the year. Two of the largest festivals, Coachella and Stagecoach, have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This means a great deal of money and jobs have been lost. Here in the Coachella Valley, we are considered a tourist region, so when tourists can't come or events are cancelled, it is devastating. I was supposed to work at both festivals to help subsidize income for my family. Now, that has been made unavailable. And I am left looking for other ways to bring necessary funds into my household. Not having the festivals and several other events at our many Casinos has been really disparaging. We also have hundreds of Golf courses and resorts. This has put a lot of our people out of work. This also brings a damper to all of the other resources that help make these festivals and events complete. All of the maintenance, food vendors, and other vendors have also lost out of money. I actually work at a Boys and Girls Club and we have been shut down since March 16th. Although, I am still getting paid, it has not been as much as it normally would and that has hurt our family. We have four clubhouses here in the Coachella Valley with thousands of students; having to see these kids not being able to get together and play and have a place to escape for a while has been difficult. We have implemented virtual clubhouse programs to help keep the community connected. Although, that has been made difficult because several of our more eastern cities are more rural. These cities do not have great internet service. Therefore, several students cannot access activities and/or even participate in distance-learning. It is really sad to see how some of our students have not been able to get the help they need.

Santa Fe Tourism During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Santa Fe, New Mexico is a popular tourist destination because of its art scene, culture, cuisine, historical sites and landscape. It brings in an average of two million visitors each year. However, because of the COVID-19 Pandemic those numbers have drastically dropped in 2020.

TOURISM Santa Fe has created a webpage that provides visitors with current information on New Mexico's COVID-19 restrictions, rules, and policies.

The Collapse of the Concert Industry

On June 5, 2020, I was scheduled to attend a concert to see The Lumineers at BB&T Pavilion in Camden, New Jersey. As an avid concert-goer, I would regularly attend music festivals, live performances, and music events throughout the year to view my favorite performers. From Radiohead and Lana Del Rey to Post Malone and Pearl Jam, the amount of musicians that I have yet to see is limited. My experience at music festivals speaks to the love and appreciation I have for the concert industry; spending a week outside in the blazing heat surrounded by thousands of other concertgoers (who are usually drenched in sweat and dehydrated) are moments that I cherish year after year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, I was unable to see any concerts, music festivals, or performances because of CDC health restrictions and the threat of the virus. In June, I received an email detailing that my concert tickets to see The Lumineers were cancelled and my money would be refunded. An option that the event company provided was to donate concert tickets to healthcare workers serving in hospitals, nursing homes, and other essential workspaces. The inclusion of this option struck me as a compassionate and empathetic gesture towards recognizing the essential workers of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a college student, I do not bear witness to the firsthand account of serving sick patients and being exposed to a deadly virus. Providing healthcare workers, who are risking their lives to keep the majority of the population safe, concert tickets to enjoy when the pandemic ends is a wonderful gesture and reminds me to celebrate local healthcare workers in my community. Despite the positive tone of the cancellation email, I am saddened to reflect on the future of the concert industry. Health restrictions caused many local concert venues to close and left many struggling musicians and artists to find other means of work instead of pursuing a music career. Concerts are a means of bringing diverse communities together to celebrate a singular thing: the power of music in providing healing, love, and joy. During adversities, I turn to music to find solace and comfort, as do others, and the absence of live performances in the future gives me anguish knowing that I may never see Vampire Weekend on stage, attend Lollapalooza Music Festival, or dance to Tame Impala's music ever again. However, I love seeing the creation of alternative options to live music, such as neighborhood concerts and rooftop performances where viewers can distance themselves from others and wear masks while enjoying the atmosphere of a concert-like setting. Once the COVID-19 pandemic ends, I am anxiously awaiting the return of the concert industry so I can continue to sing and dance to my favorite bands! The image I have concluded is a screenshot of the email that I received from BB&T Pavilion detailing that the concert was cancelled, but I had the option to donate my tickets to healthcare workers on the frontline. While I am upset that I was not able to attend the concert in June, I believe that healthcare workers should be compensated for their time, sacrifice, and devotion to the betterment of our society through their tireless efforts in healthcare. This option is a perfect example of how individuals can give back to members of our society that are fighting to end the COVID-19 pandemic and to acknowledge their progress and effort to keep every person safe from sickness.

Real, Rural Concerns

My husband, son and I moved (back) to Durango, Colorado from Monument at the end of February. We closed on our house, started back at school and reconnected with the friends we missed while we were away. Then the news stories started popping up here and there about a new and unidentified virus that is showing up in cities. "Good thing we live here!" I thought to myself. We live in the mountains, in a scattered neighborhood outside a small town in a sparsely-

populated area of the country. We'll be fine. My husband's job went to 100% telework. Since he works for the Federal Government, I figured it was just very precautionary and we settled into the convenience of having him home! My son's school went on spring break, more time for playing and friends! I saw on the news that all the schools in Wisconsin (my home state) closed for the rest of the year! Holy cow! I still figured we would not see anything real from this now-named Coronavirus. Then my son's school closed for the year. Suddenly, the entire nation, even our little rural hamlet, came to a shuddering halt. By now, it is into March, nearly April. Tourists still show up to get their last ski runs in, and first hikes and rafting trips of the year in. I suppose that is good. Our entire area relies on tourism so if we can keep things moving, that is a positive, right? Well it turns out there is a pretty huge downside of living in a remote area during a pandemic. Yes, we do not come into contact with many people, we don't have a freeway anywhere nearby, and we do not have a large airport. However, we also lack the resources to have a mass of patients at our hospital. There is one main medical facility that serves a very large area. If this virus shows up here, we could be doomed. With my husband and son home, we hunkered in to see what was going to happen. Fast forward to October, and we have had a handful of cases in our county and neighboring ones, despite the rush of Texas and California tourists this summer. We lost a couple cherished restaurants and establishments, and were not immune to this pandemic. But taking an assessment at the moment, I'm pretty proud of our area. There were arguments on masks, social distancing, sports, and restaurants, that shadowed the nation as a whole, but I saw communities band together like never before. Out of this crisis, there blossomed a new understanding and grace lent to our neighbors that we maybe did not express before. New programs popped up to help those who were struggling, because in reality, we were ALL struggling. This area historically struggles with suicide, and there has been an enormous push to reach out to everyone possible and offer all kinds of hands, or ears as the case may be. All in all, I am proud of my community and I am proud of how we are weathering this storm, among so much other commotion battling for our focus.

Tipsy Tales

We spent 2 and a half years building the [Philippines'] first immersive theater on Filipino Folklore. We ran for an amazing six months serving thousands of locals and tourists alike. We had a lot of dreams for the company. We wanted to export multi-sensory interactive theatrical experiences on Filipino culture to the world. We wanted to make people happy.

The pandemic had shut down both live entertainment and the tourism industry. We could no longer afford to keep it running in the new normal. When we had to close our production, it was heart breaking. Everyone knows how hard it is [to] open a business, but few people talk about the kind of grief that comes with closing one.

For a while, it felt like I had lost a child. So young and full of potential that died before it's time. There was a pain to losing something you've worked so hard to grow from the ground up.

Appendix B.4 – Chapter 5

Coronavirus Confessions CDC

I am angry CDC guidance for schools lags current science and as a result we are lulled into believing reopening plans safe.

My company allowed me to walk out because the company was ok about disregarding the CDC rules of six foot and wearing a mask.

Our plant mgmt is using CDC "guidelines" to keep from quarantining ppl w COVID+ close contacts at food plants. FastfoodNOTcritical

Coronavirus Confessions Governor

THX to the governors & health officials who care enough about their citizens to impose restrictions!

Colorado Covid cases are surging and the governor refuses to issue stay at home orders again. I don't understand.

The state of New Mexico will continue remote learning next week. I am very thankful for Governor Lujan Grisham

I'm a teacher in Florida. Our Governor has decided to make school children and teacher his "canaries in the coal mine." Help!

Thank God for a Democratic governor not forcing students and teachers back to school if not safe. Thankful for #unionstrong.

I'm a teacher. We have no cleaning supplies because they are backordered. The governor's promised "safety kits" have not arrived.

I'm a guidance counselor in Central Florida. Governor clueless! Scared and furious I have to go back and have no say in the matter

I feel like a sacrificial lamb. Some of my colleagues will die before school boards and governors are willing to risk closures.

It is imperative that leaders such as superintendents, mayors, governors and president put a hold on opening schools.

S.C. governor wants face to face schools but won't open governor's mansion for tours because HIGH covid spread #virtualuntilsafe

I secretly hoped the governor shut down the state so my work place had to closed because I didn't feel safe working there.

Retired. Mad as hell at the Donald and my governor for prioritizing the economy over me and my wife's lives.

I'm grateful to our governor's leadership and Fauci. They give us hope

People are ignoring our governor's stay at home order and congregating. Why are generally smart people acting stupid and selfish?

Coronavirus Confessions Trump

I may drop my best friend of 20 yrs since believes the Trump/Repub BS that the virus is overblown, and he knows I had it bad.

I'm a micro business owner. Income down 70%. I got an EIDL loan which will outlive me. Covid is less terrifying than Trump.

Trump cancels Fl convention due to Covid fears yet he and Fl Gov expect all schools to open next week. Perfectly logical.

Trump would get so many votes if he would close in person school until a vaccine was available. #virtualuntilsafe

I teach science. Virtually or face to face, I need to reinforce that science is real and not made up as the Trump Admin does.

If you are reading this just know I care about you. Coronavirus surges in many states and Trump does NOT care if you live or die.

I'm terrified that Trump will drop out of the race and Pence will be elected. I have never before actually hated people. Scared!

I hope that ALL Trump supporters get COVID-19 & are close to dying from it that it wakes them up enough to vote him out of office

My Dad said he felt sorry for my 3 yr old twins that i was their mother because i dont like Trump. I blocked him.

I own my home, but my son, wife and family live here as they are broke. They worship Trump and won't see it's his fault. Maddening

What if even after all the obvious failings, Trump still wins again? I am so depressed at the prospect. My entire family is.

I voted for Trump. My mom doesn't know and I don't think I can ever tell her. I won't be making that mistake again this November.

Moved in w/ my Boomer parents who think hand sanitizer&Trump will save them. I'm a single working mom. Idk where else to get help.

"Jesus Christ" and our "Honorable President Trump" will guide us thru this pandemic. "Have Faith"!

This virus is going to kill some of my relatives. They think this is a hoax to discredit Trump. Many of them have health issues.

I wish all the Trump fans who don't take this seriously would get seriously ill or die of COVID-19 to teach them all a lesson.

I blame Donald Trump, Mario Cuomo, MTA, and the Union TWU100 for allow the spread of covid 19 around NYC.

Glad I'm working. Hate hearing my Trump-loving, conspiracy theory & deep-state believing boss spout twisted views on virus.

My 83 yr old mother did not believe there was a pandemic; she watches Fox news and voted for Trump. Unless not until Trump did..

I'm worried Trump will force people to return to work too early. He might think it's okay to sacrifice lives for money...I don't.

We're lucky enough to live in a rural community - my boss subscribes to Trumps every word putting me and my coworkers at risk!

Ron Desantis says your children and your families are disposable. The president played "Live and Let Die" at rally. Sickening.

It is imperative that leaders such as superintendents, mayors, governors and president put a hold on opening schools.

President wants schools open in person, yet his son's school is not going back until Oct.
#virtualuntilsafe

I'll vote for any president who will mandate a quarantine so that I can stop being the jerk who doesn't let my teen go out.

The Presidents response to COVID was infantile. He would have been better prepared if he put aside his pride. I voted for him too.

This virus and this president have caused a split with my son who has my grandkids... it's heartbreaking all the way around!

I feel angry that our president doesn't care what happens. My sister had the virus, she said it was like an elephant sitting on her.

I feel like the President thinks I am disposable.

JOTPY CDC

Covid Threat

My dad was diagnosed with cancer in November of 2019 and it came as a shock to all of us. He started chemotherapy in February of 2020, and as a result of his treatment his immune system was becoming weak. My dad continued to get better but the issue became about his immune system and covid. Covid-19 became a big issue for the United States in March so my family was very worried about getting sick for my dad since his immune system was getting weaker. As a result of this, my family and I did not go out and see other people CDC guidelines would be violated. This meant none of my siblings and I could ever truly hangout with our friends over the entire summer and Christmas break. Some people were violating Covid restrictions and stay at home orders, however, we could not because my family and I could not take the risk of getting my dad sick. While our friends were all hanging out we could not go because the risk wasn't worth the potential outcome of getting our dad sick. Even after some of the covid restrictions got lifted towards the end of 2020 I could still not go out because my dad could not get sick. This picture represents what me and my family would do since we could not hang out with our friends or extended family. We would play board games and would do trivia with our extended family. This was not ideal for me and my siblings because we wanted to hang out with our friends, but we knew we could not. Many families endured this over the course of this pandemic. Even just seeing your grandparents was hard to do because they are old and cannot get sick with covid. Many families including mine sacrificed seeing their other family because it was too big of a risk to see them and potentially get covid. This picture is an important representation of my covid experience because it brought me and my family closer together during a hard time. We spent a lot more time playing games and just hanging out with each other over the several months we were home from school.

Preparing for the Public Again: Supplies Needed for Reopening Oklahoma Business in Phase 3 During COVID-19

Starting June 1st, Oklahoma Governor Stitt's Phase 3 of Oklahoma's reopening began. The Richey Insurance Agency of Blanchard, Oklahoma has still not opened partly due to the company's employees being in the vulnerable categories. One of the other reasons is the difficulty in obtaining much needed cleaning supplies and the creation of new office protocols to maintain CDC suggested safety measures. Being a small independent business in a rural area, we are not given strict corporate or state regulations to enact. Instead, we are reliant on state and CDC information as well as our own ingenuity of how to best observe these suggestions. Some of the items that we've recently obtained include: plexiglass barriers for two desks, new easily cleanable office chairs, automated hand sanitizer stations, 70% isopropyl alcohol for spray bottles, bulk bottle of hand sanitizer, brightly colored tape for marking distancing locations on the floor, emergency masks, emergency gloves, and document exchange trays. All of these items are newly purchased and weren't necessary before COVID-19. The barriers will help maintain sanitary work spaces and create social distancing gaps. The chairs are especially important because they are replacing the previous cloth chairs. These new chairs' entire surface is either vinyl or metal, making it easier to clean after every customer. The social distancing rules will be a maximum of four customers in the office. This is approximately one third of its usual heavy customer points normally.

All of these changes are based on a downward progression of COVID-19 cases to prevent our employees from unnecessary risk. Right now, three of the employees work from home and will

continue until the office is officially open. Currently the new COVID-19 cases are on an upward trend in Oklahoma, with 225 new cases on Saturday June 12th, the single largest day since the beginning of the outbreak. With numbers like these, Phase 3 seems to be more of risk than we had planned. Much of the ramp up to open will be stalled until Oklahoma numbers show a significant decline.

Personal story submitted for the #ruralvoices collection. Contributed by Clinton P. Roberts, curatorial intern for Arizona State University, HST 580.

Covit-19 and the outdoors

What do you do when you cannot do what you normally do?

In Arizona the guidelines of the Governor have been pretty light except for a couple of weeks on April 2020, otherwise he was very proud to say that Arizona would follow the CDC guidelines “the Arizona way”. Meaning? We recommend the mask but is up the business to decide the extent of the enforcement; six feet distance, the same; stay home if you feel you have symptoms, of course. I have to say that the business, for the most part, have taken a more responsible posture than the authorities. Even today April 2021, when the Governor remove any obligation to wear mask, I continue to see most of the business, and population at large, that continue to wear the mask in public.

So, with these light restrictions what do you do when you cannot do what you normally do?

The answer for many Arizonians, and visitors, has been outdoor activities! Hiking, biking or simply going to the park.

My story is of last September 2021. I too decided to resume my mountain biking activity in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve and I sent my bike to a shop for routine maintenance and replace of my old tires. What I find out is that the shop could not find any tire of my kind through their suppliers in fact, they told me, it is getting difficult even to buy a new bike, the bike market just exploded . . . I was not alone. They suggest for me to go to Amazon and look for tires and I was lucky to find my tires from a pool of only 7 in all US!!!

Silver line: thank to Covint-19 the US population is finally exercising, I'll take it

JOTPY Governor

Thanksgiving of 2020

My Thanksgiving this year was barely changed. Ignoring guidelines by Democratic governor Newsom, who doesn't even seem to be able to follow his own rules, I celebrated a great thanksgiving. My family gathered together at my house and my mother made the meal. We had multiple pies and a large turkey to separate between all family members that could come. I had a great time celebrating, and no one in my family has got sick from the gathering.

Governor Doug Ducey . . .

This is the social media form of the Joint Statement from Governor Doug Ducey and Superintendent of Public Instruction Kathy Hoffman made on March 30, 2020 announcing the extension of physical school closures through the end of the school year. It emphasizes the roles schools have in continuing virtual and take home learning opportunities, as well as the legislature in ensuring continued pay to educators and staff members.

"In alignment with yesterday's updated federal guidance, today we are announcing the extension of school closures through the remainder of the school year. Today's announcement is intended to give parents and educators as much certainty as possible so they can plan and make decisions.

While this isn't the outcome any of us wanted, we are grateful for the partnership of schools around the state, who have stepped up to offer virtual and take-home learning opportunities to our students. These efforts are crucial, and we recognize that schools are making every effort possible to provide instruction during closures. We also thank our legislative partners for passing legislation ensuring all educators and staff see no disruption in pay. Our number one priority will continue to be health and safety, and we will continue to work closely with public health officials to make the best decisions for kids, families, and our school communities. "

JOTPY Trump

A Government Against It's People

Finding any type of media that will accurately show what little the government has done and the lack of support the people of America have is unbelievably easy. In fact, I had a hard time choosing between which cartoon illustration was better. I knew our government wasn't perfect, but it wasn't until Donald Trump being elected and the coronavirus pandemic hitting our homes did I realize how terrible things really are. These cartoons depicted so well how our government has harmed us more than helped us. The dangerous lies told by our own president and how the government won't take responsibility. When corona made its way to the U.S it was deemed unserious. On March 11th, 2020, President Trump said, "The vast majority of Americans, the risk is very, very low." At that time there were 1,105 cases and 33 deaths documented in the U.S. The next day my highschool as well as every other school within the country closed down as an "extra week of spring break" due to the virus. This "break" soon became eight months and in the U.S alone there are now 8,128,524 (plus 47,035 new) cases with 218,986 (plus 475 new) deaths . The scare became real, people started stocking up leaving nothing for anyone else. We have almost 15 people in our home, it took my mom multiple trips to different stores in order to get the necessities for our family. You would think when a pandemic is spreading throughout people in the country you were placed in position to protect you'd address the problem seriously and work hard to find a solution. All Trump and our government has done was ignore the citizens deaths and provide false hope. What we did get was our president being sarcastic and telling us to inject lysol into our lungs. The citizen's of America have seen other countries rise in numbers of coronavirus with us and then watch their governments actually handle the situation causing their numbers to decline while our numbers are still shooting through the roof. The panic of this virus does not even cross the mind of those who are rich, the group that our current president only cares about. They didn't have to worry about medical bills in a country where the president doesn't believe free healthcare is a human right because they know they are important in his eyes. At the end of this virus, it will be the stories from the one percent belittling the destruction of this virus rather than those who have actually suffered. America is running on ignorance right now. Our own president and government is not concerned with the health of the country. It is the government's job to protect and provide for its people, whether it be an outside threat or a threat within the country. When I look at those cartoons of Donald Trump and the coronavirus, it makes me remember how badly I want our country to actually function the way it is intended to.

The Face Mask Dilemma

Since the pandemic went into full swing in March 2020, the use of face masks has been the center of debate all across the United States. Americans perceive the policing of face masks as an infringement on their First Amendment rights despite the overall safety of the public's health being the major concern. As someone who worked in restaurants their whole life, I understand

that working customer service isn't for the faint-hearted. However, anti-maskers were prominent despite multiple signs in the windows mandating masks upon entry/exit, COVID safety procedures displayed everywhere, and every employee wearing a mask and enforcing the guidelines issued by the CDC. Some even went as far as creating forged exemption cards that forced the Federal Trade Commission to issue a statement against them. I have been verbally assaulted, had stuff thrown at me, and even had individuals take off their mask and cough towards me just to entice some sort of violence or display their "dominance" over those who are fearful of catching the virus. Right before I resigned, multiple coworkers caught the virus simply from interacting with customers in the restaurant. Our managers at the time refused to tell anyone for weeks or notify anyone who had come into contact with them to get tested – including me. This attributed to why I left the customer service industry a couple months after the pandemic began: the threat to my personal health and that of my high-risk family members did not exceed the monetary value of a job in that industry when managers are more concerned about profit than the safety of their employees. Instead of removing these individuals from the restaurant, managers would cater towards them to ensure they didn't lose a customer, effectively displaying their concerns: money, money, and money. Americans seem to value the economic standpoint of their nation and their freedom to do whatever they desire, even if it means potentially killing someone, just to maintain that status of "freedom" that they pride themselves so much in. In fact, President Trump refused to extend quarantine or even fully enforce it due to the economic instability it proposed by shutting down the government and his reluctance to pay citizens more than a one-time stimulus check of \$1200. The economy did slightly waiver, but as of September of 2020, more than 200,000 Americans have died from the virus - higher than any other country in the world. I would think that the survival of your constituents would be more of a pressing matter than handing out "free money" (as many Americans called it), but obviously our subpar leader thinks otherwise. I will not return to the restaurant business for quite sometime to maintain my health, my roommate's health, and my parents/grandmother's health. We've been forced to do our best to keep ourselves safe because the federal government reopened the entire country after partial lockdowns that proved ineffective.

Don't stereotype. Ever.

COVID-19, BLM Notes June 11, 2020

It's hard to put my thoughts in words. The news and social media are swirling in a constant maelstrom of things that seem like they should be false. Yet they're not. In the middle of the BLM and COVID-19 crisis, President Trump announced that he would be holding his first rally since Covid-19 in Tulsa Oklahoma. It will be on the anniversary of the massacre of the black community in Tulsa by the KKK. It also is a holiday marking the end of slavery in the US. This can go so wrong. 1968 Democratic Convention wrong. With semi-automatic weapons wrong. I'm sure supporters can make the argument that Trump is planning to make a speech that will help heal wounds. I hope that is the case. I sincerely doubt it. Even if it is, his administration has to understand the tinderbox they are laying fuel for. I simply don't understand. Additionally, COVID-19 cases are on the rise as states begin to reopen. So many people gathering for rallies and protests will up the ante even more. 😞😞

I'm angry about seeing my former law enforcement community painted with the same hostile brush that should be pointed at the bad cops and unions that protect them. It's damn tough to be a cop, even in a small community like mine. I still bear some scars.

Cops are underpaid for the shit they have deal with. Mental health services may be offered if a

department is large enough, but it would go on ones permanent record. Mental health is still stigmatized, so why would a cop want treatment for depression on their records?

When Ron and I were dating, I had to undergo, on separate occasions, a herpes test and two AIDS tests. Imagine the fun that it is to tell my new boyfriend that kissing isn't allowed because I may have gotten herpes after giving mouth to mouth to someone I just cut down. (His response : If you have it, I already have it, so it doesn't matter. You marry a guy like that. I did).

Then we had a another suicide. We didn't wear gloves back then. I'm sure we had them in the trunk but it would be wimpy to wear them. I got blood on my hands. Then the coroner found the suicide note. AIDS. I'm a nail biter. I had hang nails down to my knuckles. I went to Springfield for my tests because I didn't dare have it done in my community. AIDS was a very dirty word back then.

I'm a chatterbox. The phlebotomist and I would be joking and laughing until they saw what the draw was for. A cold chill over took the room as they loudly triple gloved. Snap, snap, snap..... glaring at me. I was a junkie or a prostitute. Once I explained, they were so kind and emphatic. That's when I decided to try and treat everybody with kindness and respect. I don't know their back story and what led them to be in the position they are in. Be an asshole to me and I can be one right back but you get more peas with honey.

Turns out, it wasn't AIDS. False positives were common back in the early days. Strangely enough, these aren't calls that bug me. That's what cop do. There's only one that eats at me and I'll unpack that some other time. I'm still processing the ghosts of that one.

I bring them up because this is the kind of emotional crap cops deal with. Every single god damn day we clean up humanities mess. Yet there are people who want to vilify the entire law enforcement community, a community that includes people like me. I remember comforting a two year old toddler at another suicide. Mom thought the sitter would show up before the child woke up. She didn't. I'm holding this little girl who spent the morning putting popsicles on her dead diabetic mother's chest to get her to wake up. 36 years later I remember exactly where I standing, trying to comfort that poor child as I tried to process what was going on.

So, as you shout to defund the police and tear down every single police agency that has ever represented you, think of me as a young adult from the age of 22 to 24, holding that child, wondering if I was going to die from AIDS, almost getting herpes from a corpse. I still had almost five years to go. I'm the people you are denigrating. I'm proud of the work I did. If you're looking for the bad, that's all you're going to see.

Be cautious in the wording of any negative comments you might leave. I'm not much in the mood to keep my peas on my knife.

Election Night 2020

This poem sits at the nexus of pandemic life and political desperation. My wife lost multiple elderly family members to COVID because her parents believed the rhetoric spread by Donald Trump and those like him. Five years of dealing with racist, sexist, homophobic and transphobic bigotry being the political norm, and eight months of a pandemic in the heart of one of the largest science denying states in the country led to this moment of desperation, where all I could do was blindly bake and write to get the nervous energy out.

It's funny.

Last election night

I was baking

Pig in a blankets,

With dough made carefully,
Each hot dog lovingly folded
Within the handmade dough
My stomach only roiling
With hunger
And hope
As I cast my vote
For the first time.
This year, I bake
In a flurried dance of desperation,
Swirling about the kitchen
Making pound cake
From a pouch –
Too exhausted
To craft it all from scratch.
My stomach quavering
With the toxicity
That's been pouring in my system
For half a decade.
Tell me –
Will there ever come a time
When I'm as care free as that night,
Weaving in a blessing
Into every bite?
My food drips with my
Uncertainty.
Melancholy dripped into the folds
Of half kneaded dough
Deemed good enough.
I don't have the spoons
To go on
Kneading
And working
On this thing. Just
Throw it in the oven already
And bake it until
It's slightly overdone.
When will my baking
Return
To fulfill me
Fill me with joy
In feeling the pull
Of my ancestors who
Wove stories into their bread and tea cakes?
Will tonight
Bring that joy

Back to my hands
 So I can create magic
 Again?
 Or will they suffer under the strain
 Of a manic
 Folding in on the self
 That's been my story
 The last four years?

- Waiting

JOTPY Trust

Mad, mad, world

COVID-19 Black lives matter : June 1, 2020

The news of the riots and looting that have broken out at BLM protests is horrifying. There are so many supremacists, instigators and fame whores trying to remove the message that Black Lives Matter. There also seems to be a misunderstanding in the slogan. All lives should matter. They don't. Black lives matter, too.

Despite the agitators, I was so pleased to hear that the Marches in Decatur and cities around were peaceful. Last night, I talked myself out of participating in a March out of fear of violence. The very violence I want to be standing against. I'm disappointed in myself. Age and illness have cost me some of my fearlessness. The Freedom Fighters traveled the segregated South, facing beatings and possible death. Such courage they had.

I kept my phone away purposefully today. It seems every hour we have something and strange to react to. Space Launch! YAY!!! Riots! WTF!!!

Two hours later, more info is available that modifies the initial reaction. Then, by the evening, reactions change again after we're bombarded with opinions and news links from social media. We try to get our bearings and then we're confronted with something new and equally mindboggling. UFO's? Barely a mention.

Conflicting opinions abound, with no consistency from our state and federal governments.

It's hard not to long for the days when I trusted Walter Cronkite and thought the government was looking out for my best interests. Illinois Governor's Kerner and Walker shattered that pipe dream. Watergate ground the pieces into dust.

It was another gorgeous day, today. Bright, sunny with a gentle wind. I kept the windows open and putzed around the yard. We found a new home for our old pool. It will have five playful kids enjoying it, rather than sitting in pile outside our shed. It can join it's Toy Story buddies and return to its life as a pool filled with children.

I needed to be outside today. Away from humanity. I'm out on my sleeping swing, listening to wind. At times, it almost sounds waves rolling in. The moon is just bright enough that I watched Rocky Raccoon searching for grubs, not ten feet from me. I didn't disturb him. He slowly meandered across the yard.

I think a Mama Deer may have a fawn stashed in the ditch across the road. I heard a huff and stomp. Maybe Rocky got too close.

The stars are bright and fireflies are all over the place. The other night the grands were convinced they were falling stars.

Nights like this, during times like this, I wonder why humans were given dominion of the earth.

Then I remember I'm just a tiny grain of sand. A grain of sand that helps forge canyons. I'm grateful I can find peace and calm under Mother Nature's mantle.

Won't You Be My Stranger

Before Covid-19 descended upon Chicago, Ukrainian Village was a neighborhood of friends and acquaintances. The threat of illness has suspended neighborly activities. The neighbor whose door this belongs to has a beagle named Molly I used to pet on her walks. Now Molly and I keep our distance, lest her owner or I get sick. It's demoralizing not to be able to trust people, not because of any personal shortcoming, but because of the potential that one of our health be jeopardized. The status friend and acquaintance has been supplanted by temporary stranger.

Free Beans

I didn't think to take a picture at the time, but while out for a walk I saw a paper shopping bag at the end of a driveway. It had "free beans" written in black marker on the side, and lo and behold the grocery bag was full of lots of bags of beans!

It's a great thing to do, and I didn't need anything so I walked on without thinking too much about what it all meant. I'm in San Jose, CA which is in one of the first counties to order a Shelter in Place. Everyday it feels like reported cases are skyrocketing, and then they go up further.

I was walking around a poorer neighborhood. Stores are so close to empty of food (and puzzles) and many people don't have cars to load up and panic buy for long stretches.

Of course, I can't know what the exact experience of the gift giver was. But I know that they put the community above their own needs, and they didn't even need to be thanked for it. Could have kept the beans for themselves, for sure. They trusted that those who would take the beans would need the food more than they did, and that the rest of us wouldn't be greedy. After all, it's hard to be greedy when you are surrounded by such selfless people.

JOTPY Inequalities

Middle of the Road

Growing up as a middle class white female, being one who fights for the under dog (social justice) has always made me stand out. One of the reasons I was attracted to my current college, Antioch was that the school fights for social justice. The pandemic has shined a light on all the inequalities in our nation and globally. Initially, when the protesting began it felt needed and I was in full support. As time has passed, the protests have become violent and I have seen people from the left and the right become narrow minded and clouded by anger. Today, I still stand for social justice and support many of the protests but what I have learned from seeing political arguments in the media is that I don't know a whole lot about our nations history, government processes, and the history of racism in the world. I no longer trust the news and today's journalist. Before the pandemic, I knew exactly who I wanted to vote for during this years presidential election and now I don't know. I find myself in the middle between the Democratic and Republican party. I don't want to not vote because I lose my voice. What the pandemic and protests have shown me is that I need to educate myself so I can make an informed opinion before I vote instead of voting blindly like I have in the past. Where I find myself now is in the middle of the road, a place I ne[ve]r thought I would find myself and a position that is extremely uncomfortable.