

Transcript of Interview with Audrey von Heyking by Emily Clink

Interviewee: Audrey von Heyking

Interviewer: Emily Clink

Date: 02/09/2022

Location (Interviewee):

Location (Interviewer):

Abstract: A thirty-five-minute interview with Audrey von Heyking, a junior high student, about the evolution of her experience of the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years. She discusses the differences between her experiences of grades six, seven, and eight and touches on the difficulties of maintaining friendships. She also discusses how the pandemic has changed her home life.

Emily Clink 00:03

Excellent. I think that is the recording going. So my name is Emily Clink and today I will be interviewing...

Audrey von Heyking 00:12

Audrey von Heyking.

Emily Clink 00:13

Yes, we are doing this interview over Zoom. The date today is February 9, 2022. The relationship between myself and the interviewee is that she is my younger cousin.

Audrey von Heyking 00:27

Yes.

Emily Clink 00:29

Perfect. So just to double check with you, Audrey, will you please confirm that you have signed the form of assent and that your mother Sonia von Heyking has signed the form of consent?

Audrey von Heyking 00:44

Yes, me and my mom have.

Emily Clink 00:46

Excellent. Um, so then I'm just going to quickly remind both of us about the purpose for this interview today. And we're doing for this project, we're going to be doing an interview for a Journal of the Plague Year: an Archive of COVID-19. The mission of the journal is to document, curate, and preserve experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic for the historical record. It's also to offer students and educators opportunities to learn from and contribute to the archive, the hope is to collaborate with and empower diverse communities to collect, share and interpret their own stories of the COVID-19 pandemic. And to of course, develop a model for rapid response born digital collecting practices, theories, and ethical frameworks. And I just want to thank you so much, Audrey, for agreeing to participate today.

Audrey von Heyking 01:41

You're welcome.

Emily Clink 01:43

No problem. So just first things first, I'm really curious. What do you recall about the start of all this? Do you remember, you know, where, where you were when you first heard of the virus? What you sort of thought about it immediately?

Audrey von Heyking 01:59

Yeah. Oh, my goodness. Yeah, I remember I was at school. And, like, for few days, and this was in like, March 2020, but like, a few days before it all started. And like, for a few days, those, they're like, my friends and some teachers just were saying, like, oh, there's this illness going around in other countries. But you know, it's really minor. Um, and then, like, I remember, like, the exact day that, um, it happened, basically. So, I think it was a Thursday. Um, I was... it was like, after school, I had a rehearsal for a play that I was in. And my friend was there too. And at the rehearsal, you know, like the teachers were saying, like, try not to touch each other. Don't cough on each other. Like, there's like a, there's like a cold going around, kind of. And then, and also, that night, I was supposed to, they're supposed to be a babysitter. I supposed to be babysat. But before that, me and my friend got picked up, and we went and met my mom, and she was getting her hair done. And then, and then there, my parents told me that we weren't going to have a babysitter because, like that night, and they had canceled because what they were going to do, while like we were being babysat, was they were going to go to like a gala kind of thing. But like the government had just said, like, no...um gatherings, over 250 people. So they didn't go. And then basically the next day, my sister, I had just seen her, I guess we had just visited and then she went back to her place in Calgary. And... um... and... and then she had texted my mom and she said that she wasn't feeling well. And then we thought that she had COVID. Um, so I didn't go to school. And then the day after that, I found that I wasn't going to school for the rest of the year. So that was kind of crazy. Yeah.

Emily Clink 04:24

Absolutely. Goodness. Do you remember sort of what your kind of... initial sort of emotions were regarding that? Like, did you kind of remember? Oh, yeah. Do any sort of initial emotions or thoughts about like, how long it was gonna last or kind of your initial reaction to the situation?

Audrey von Heyking 04:48

Yeah. I was... um... I was kind of doubting everything until it happened. Like people were saying, like, oh, we might have to go into lockdown. I was like, "That's bogus!" Um... and then like, I remember one of my friends texted me, we were supposed to go on a field trip to another city at the end of the year. And my friend texted me and he was like, "Do you think we're still gonna go on this field trip?" And I was like, "Oh, yeah, for sure. Because the only way that we won't... like, basically if... like... the only quarantine you'll have to do is if you get COVID, and that's only for two weeks. So yeah, we're definitely going on a field trip." And then, um, you know, like, the next day, my parents are like, "Oh, Audrey, you're not going to school for the rest of the year." I was really, really, really sad. I cried. I remember it really well. And then I was also thinking like, "Oh, no, we don't get to go on that field trip." It was really sad.

Emily Clink 05:45

Yeah, exactly. So would you say that... that sort of initial reaction was sort of different to how you view it now?

Audrey von Heyking 05:53

Yeah, totally. Yeah. Like in... when... when it happened and I found out that I wasn't going to school for the rest of the year, I was really sad. I was crying. Very, very sad. And then now, if someone told me that we weren't going back to school for the rest of the year, I probably... I might shed a tear, but I would be like, "No, that makes sense." It's normal by this point. And yeah. I would just be like, "Oh, yeah, that. Yeah."

Emily Clink 06:29

Do you think that's also changed too? Do you think sort of... throughout the kind of... throughout COVID, that you sort of had like different reactions? Because obviously, you've been in and out of school a lot?

Audrey von Heyking 06:39

Yeah. Um... I don't think like... can you rephrase the question?

Emily Clink 06:49

Yeah, totally. Would you say that... Because you said, you know, at first you were sort of like, "Oh, I mean, it'll probably be fine." Right. And then now... and then when you found out that you couldn't go to school, you were really sort of emotional and upset about that, right? Compared to now where it's like, almost like normal.

Audrey von Heyking 07:07

Yeah!

Emily Clink 07:08

Like, weirdly, it's upsetting, but it's like almost normal. Do you think there was ever like an in between point for you, kind of throughout the pandemic?

Audrey von Heyking 07:16

Yeah...um... probably, like... this time last year. Kind of ar... like Spring 2021? Probably. Because every time I found out that we would have to do online school, I was pretty, like upset. But I was also like, that's normal. Yeah.

Emily Clink 07:43

No, absolutely. Cool. Thank you. I'm gonna move on to the second question. If that works.

Audrey von Heyking 07:51

Yeah.

Emily Clink 07:52

I don't know if you can think back in your memory at all... but how would you say this sort of compares to any other health crises you may have lived through or personally experienced in the past?

Audrey von Heyking 08:05

I don't think I've lived through anything comparable to this.

Emily Clink 08:09

That's fair.

Audrey von Heyking 08:11

Oh... my parents told me about one time my older sister got some sort of, like virus that was going around. I can't remember. I think it was like, some sort of flu. But... and then they were saying like, that it's.. even though it was like crazy at the time... It's nothing compared to this.

Emily Clink 08:35

Totally, yeah. So what does a typical day look like right now?

Audrey von Heyking 08:41

Like a weekday?

Emily Clink 08:43

Hm.

Audrey von Heyking 08:45

I don't know. I'd wake up, get dressed, get ready. Um.. I eat my breakfast. I get my bag together. Before I leave the house, I will make sure to grab a mask and walk to the bus stop, take the bus to school, and I have to sit in an assigned seat on the bus. You can't sit wherever you want. And then I get to school. It's kind of a normal morning, like for middl... middle school. You know? It's normal. Like we get to walk around and stuff. Um, yeah. And then I just go into class when the bell rings and I do my work. And then at lunch um... I hang out with the same people every day, because I don't have that many friends, because you can't really interact with the other classes. But I do. I hang out with like the same people all the time. And... yeah... and then the afternoon I continue with my classes. I have gym in the afternoon. And in gym... we still have to wear masks. But it was just kind of unfortunate.... you're like exercising. Um... and... uh... and then after school sometimes I'd have rehearsal. I had rehearsal today. And... um... yeah, we just go through everything. And with our masks on. Yeah, it's pretty much a normal day, but I have to wear a mask. Yeah.

Emily Clink 10:23

Would you say anything about that routine that you just described has changed throughout the course of the pandemic?

Audrey von Heyking 10:31

Yes! Very much so. Um.. yeah, like at the beginning of the pandemic, for the first few months, I'd like sleep in. Take advantage of it. I'd go to my online, my one online class with my homeroom teacher at like 10am. And then I get all my work done by 11, which was not that much work, because I got it all done by 11. And then I would just like be bored and watch YouTube and stuff for the rest of the afternoon. I remember one time I made it... like gigantic... like board game with my younger brother that took up the entire living room. So yeah, that was the beginning, through last year, like the last school year... um... I was like.. I think I woke up a bit later than I do now. Um... and I would... just wear like, whatever was there, I didn't really put that much effort into my outfits compared to now. And then I would just... oh yeah, in the last year at during school, we would like sit in the same classroom all day while our teachers came to us. And it was like, torture. And we had to stay in our classrooms for

lunch and stuff. But now we can, like we go to all our classes in different classrooms. And we can like, hang out, with everyone lunch in the mornings. And so yeah, I think slowly, throughout the last year and a half, two years, my like routine has gone from like, lazy, to a little bit less lazy, but still lazy to like, a little bit closer to normal.

Emily Clink 12:18

You've mentioned, sort of plays and sort of extracurricular activities a little bit... has that changed throughout the course of the pandemic?

Audrey von Heyking 12:26

Definitely! Um at the, at the very beginning of the pandemic, I was just finishing up with a play that I was in. Um... and COVID hit, like the 20th show, and we had six more shows to go. Um... but I couldn't do those, obviously, because there was a pandemic. Um... so that got cut short. And then during the last school year, we didn't have a play. My school always puts on a play every single year. And last year, we didn't have one, which is really sad. And then... this year, we do have a play. It's a little bit less than the last one.... rehearsals... like we're coming up on show dates, I think for performing in March... and... but we're still not like grinding as hard as we would have in the last one. And we're definitely not farther along than the last one. Rehearsals are more spaced out. Stuff like that. But it's still you know, a play. And that's kind of all I do for extra curricular- actually no, that's a lie. I take music lessons, singing lessons to be specific. At the beginning that... like I started taking them in November, like la... last last year, like in 2020. And I used to like have to do them on Zoom, which was kind of unfortunate, because... that means like, I met my teacher on Zoom. And I did online lessons up until like, July 2021 when I finally started doing in person. So now I'm doing in person, but that yeah, that's changed. And I also did gymnastics, but then I stopped when COVID... COVID hit, And I only just picked it up recently again. Yeah.

Emily Clink 14:18

Thank you. So would you say... ah, are you spending more or less time inside or outside the home?

Audrey von Heyking 14:27

Like than... the beginning of the pandemic or like before?

Emily Clink 14:31

Both! If it's changed.

Audrey von Heyking 14:35

Um probably... right now I'm probably spending a lot more time in my house than I was before the pandemic, because before the pandemic I was also in elementary school, which is in a neighborhood, so my friends at the time lived by and like all the time we would hang out after school. And I would go over to my friend's house and we would like hang out for hours... and then... Yeah, some days I'd have gymnastics. Some days... I also used to do piano, so I would do that. And then now I'd like, barely hang out with my friends outside of school. Except for one of them who still lives by me. Yeah, but I still get out of the house enough.

Emily Clink 15:19

Yeah. Would you say how... like, the way in which you spend time with your friends has changed at all?

Sonya von Heyking 15:28

Just had a thought. Because you're talking about... I heard the word friend. And you had one friend you didn't see for?

Audrey von Heyking 15:34

Yeah, okay.

Sonya von Heyking 15:36

Well, I just thought that's worth sharing.

Audrey von Heyking 15:38

I have a friend that I did not see for a year and a half. One of my best friends in elementary school... um... his parents were like, super, super strict and paranoid. And he literally like... I don't know why he didn't leave his house, because he did. But he like very, very, very rarely left his house for a year and a half. And I barely saw him. Like, he would only go out for like, weekly walks. And then sometimes he would like... and when he went for out for weekly walks, he like had to wear masks and stuff. So yeah, I didn't see him for a year and a half. And then I finally saw him a few times, at the end of last summer. And then he had to move away. So that was really unfortunate.

Emily Clink 16:26

I'm sorry to hear that. Goodness. Would you say that... because you mentioned you know, you used to sort of pre-pandemic, you know, spendin... be spending a lot of time like inside your friend's house, would you say like, the way you spend time with your friends has changed now?

Audrey von Heyking 16:43

Yeah. Um... I mean... now.. like when I hang out with my friends. It is, like kind of normal, we do, like go into each other's houses and stuff. But like... earlier in the pandemic, like before... basically from like, like March to Christmas 2020. Um like... um like... whenever I went and like hung out with a friend, we would hang out like in the... in their garage or in my garage, with like, the door open. And we'd have like lawn chairs that we'd sit on, and it would be like six feet apart. And like, in our backyards, and stuff all outside. Uh I remember, at the end of June 2020... um there was like this, like, they tried to do like, a variety show for the kids in my grade. That like... that they performed in which was a tradition at my school. But we couldn't really do that normally, so we did it online which was really awful. And I regret what I did for it. It's basically... mine was basically a bunch of random clips of me and my friends just like doing random things being socially distant. So yeah, yeah.

Emily Clink 18:11

Would you say... that... Like the internet... Or like, did you... Did you ever get to, like, hang out with them virtually during the pandemic? Or did that change at all? From before?

Audrey von Heyking 18:24

Um.. I... I never really like... actually, like, texted or FaceTimed with, like, any of my friends up until like, quite recently, actually. I just... I don't text people. I don't know why. But... um... I remember in like.. last... in the last school year, I would, when I was in, like grade seven, I had... some friends. And a few times we were like, and we were pretty close, we're not close anymore, though. We were pretty close. And we... and I made... like I made friends with them, like at school and grade... in that grade. And we would often... like we would talk about like,

later once this is all is over, we should like all hang out one day. And then one day, we decided... like we wanted to have a sleepover, but we couldn't obviously. And so we had a virtual sleepover. And we all like went on Zoom together or FaceTime. I can't remember what it was. Um... and then we just like talked and... like on FaceTime until like whenever we went to bed and then we kept being on FaceTime through the night and then woke up on FaceTime. So... but yeah... that was a little fun. Yeah.

Emily Clink 19:46

And I know you've mentioned... oh, sorry, continue.

Audrey von Heyking 19:48

I think that was one of the only times I guess that I hung out with my friends like virtually. Because... like I said previously, I just don't text my friends.

Emily Clink 20:00

Did you ever use like video games or something like that to hang out with them? I know you've mentioned playing like Roblox with your brother.

Audrey von Heyking 20:08

Um... yeah... wow... I'd like to be... Yeah, kind of the beginning of the pandemic. And also still like, kind of recently. I'd still like, I'd like FaceTime one of my friends like a lot. And we would just play Roblox together for hours. And then whenever we hung out like in our garages or in the backyard, socially distanced, we would just be on our iPads playing Roblox together. And it was fun.

Emily Clink 20:37

Cool. Um, I'm trying to think. How are you... or I guess your family... How are you getting supplies like groceries or medications right now? With the way the restrictions are.

Audrey von Heyking 20:53

We just go and get it, I guess. For groceries, we just go to the grocery store with masks on obviously. Get our stuff. I go to the grocery store a lot with my parents. I just like being there. Yeah we just go and get it. And then for medication we've actually... we get a lot of medication recently because I had a problem with my eye. So... yeah we would just like get the prescription from the doctor and then just go to the pharmacy and give it to them. And then a few hours, few days, maybe later we pick it up.

Emily Clink 21:21

So what would you say then are you doing in your spare time? Has it changed at all?

Audrey von Heyking 21:41

Yeah, not very much. But it has. At the ver-, at the very beginning of a pandemic again. I tried to be really creative. And I did a lot of cool things. Um, like I said, previously, me and my brother made a big... like... life size board game. Where like, we were the pieces and it took up our entire living room. And that was pretty cool. And that took like an afternoon. And then we would also make tons of chalk drawings on our driveway. And I think... I think I read... No, I didn't read. Since when have I read? But yeah, I don't know... I can't quite remember everything, but I did try to be like pretty creative. Oh, I remember one thing actually. I... during like Spring...

Spring 2020, I downloaded this app that I still have, I still use sometimes... um, and it's like a video editing app. And there's a feature you can buy, which I bought, where like... you can basically like... I don't know exactly how to explain it. I just do the steps. I don't exactly know what it does. But I think you can like erase kind of... half or how... like, however you want of like the screen and then you can like... put another video like into the part that's erased. So basically I would do that all the time and I would like put multiple of myself. And I still have like tons of videos in my camera roll just like tons of myself just being like "Yay, there's three of me!" but I definitely did that a lot as well. And then compared to now... lots of the time I just spend my free time just like in my room watching YouTube or reading or just texting my friends.

Emily Clink 23:36

Nice. Is there anything that you miss?

Audrey von Heyking 23:40

Um... yeah. I had three... no two.. I had two, one of them was right before, but I had two friends move away during the pandemic. One of them moved back, but yeah. I have two friends moved away and I definitely miss them. I miss like... I don't really know. I miss like a lot of stuff. I miss like.. oh, me and my friends would like... there's I guess like convenience store, like a Circle K, near my house and it's right next to Tim Hortons and all the time me and my friends would like... go walk to the Circle K and hang out at Tim Hortons and we just do that and like hang there for hours, and it was really fun. I definitely missed that. And I miss like... I don't know just like... kind of everything. Oh, I miss like going to church. Like I still go to church now, but like it's just not the same. Because we're all just like, in like, different pews. Like there's one pew, then there's a closed pew, and then there's another pew with people and there's a closed pew. They're all spaced out. And we're all wearing masks. It's just not the same. Yeah. I think I just missed, like, everything how it used to be in general. Oh, I also used to travel a lot, and I still do but... it's just not the same.

Emily Clink 25:19

What would you say is... the mood among sort of your family and your friends? How do you think they're responding to this?

Audrey von Heyking 25:28

I think... um like... like... it's just kind of the same. Like at this point... like... it's all... like everything is just normal now, unfortunately. I remember like, at the beginning, I guess, there were tons of different views. Like some people... like my friend's parents didn't want any human interaction. Some people are like, "Oh, this is nothing. I'm gonna go hang out with all my friends." But now everyone's just like, I think kind of adapted to it and just been like, yeah, I hang out with people every once in a while. I talk to people every once in a while... you know... it's just everyone's kind of the same.

Emily Clink 26:19

No, that's fair. How do you think sort of, I mean, obviously, your friends would be included in this group.... but how do you think sort of your experience of school has changed throughout the course of the pandemic?

Audrey von Heyking 26:39

It's been crazy. I've had... one and two halves. So basically, two, kind of three school years. During the pandemic, I had the end of grade six, and then grade seven. And then like halfway through grade... grade eight. And... each

one of those years was totally different. Like in at the end of grade six we were all like, super online. And like, we were all just trying to stay optimistic, but we like, barely saw each other for... through Zoom, we'd have like one meeting a day. And it was all, all online throughout the... like March through June. And then... in grade seven, it was like super restricted, like at school. And we would all just like stay our classrooms. Like we get to school, go straight to our classrooms, don't walk around. We did not have lockers. We would keep our backpacks with us by our desks all day. And we would just sit at the same desks all day, while our teachers came through and rotated classroom to classroom instead of us...going to our classes. Um... at our lunch, we just stayed in our room and watched movies. Yeah, and then now it's like, basically, kind of... kind of a normal year. There's some things that we don't do. Like, I don't... I don't actually know what they are, because I'm in a new school now. But there were, I guess, some like traditions that my school house has that we haven't done this year. But for the most part, it's basically a normal year, we just have masks on.

Emily Clink 28:21

So pretty big changes throughout... lots of sort of different periods then.

Audrey von Heyking 28:26

Yeah.

Emily Clink 28:28

Um, has vaccination changed your everyday life or your view of the pandemic?

Audrey von Heyking 28:34

Yeah, kind of... I don't know what you mean by my views of pandemic.

Emily Clink 28:41

Just like, has it changed sort of your... your life or your sort of your everyday routine being vaccinated?

Audrey von Heyking 28:48

Yeah. So yeah, I am vaccinated and like... it's kind of, like, I never really noticed that because I am vaccinated. Like, it's not... it's not something that like, "Oh, this is so different." Like... um... like I said, I take singing lessons. And whenever I go to my singing lessons... um... I think, I have to like show... well... I don't have to show the person, but that there's like a person at a desk that they put at the door. And you have to go through a certain door. There's two doors to the building and you have to go through one of them. And there's a desk with like a person there, and they have a list of like all the people who they have like... who are there like weekly and stuff who have shown their vaccinations. So I just go in. I'm like, "What's your last name?" I'm like, "von Heyking." And they're like... they check the list and like, "Alright, you can go." But like the first time that they had the list, I like had to go in and show them my vaccine proof. Whenever my family like goes out for dinner, I have to show my vaccination proof. We went to the States recently. And I had... actually I don't think I had to show my vaccination proof, but that was definitely something we're expecting. I think we like... not through airport security. And they were like... nobody asked us to show that we were vaccinated. I think they definitely meant to. Um, yeah. Yeah. So I guess being vaccinated has like, let me do a lot of things. There's not really anything that I like notice, because I'm vaccinated. I was just like, "Wow, I wouldn't be able to do that if I was not vaccinated."

Emily Clink 30:26

Yeah, totally. And I guess just as a final question, I'm just really curious to know, are there any sort of stories or experiences that sort of stuck out to you throughout the pandemic that you want to talk about?

Audrey von Heyking 30:41

I'm just thinking.

Emily Clink 30:50

Yeah! Take your time.

Audrey von Heyking 30:51

Do you mean like... by stories do you mean like things that's happened to me?

Emily Clink 31:02

Yeah!

Audrey von Heyking 31:03

Oh. I feel like... I guess one of the biggest things was my friend who was locked up.

Emily Clink 31:12

Yeah.

Audrey von Heyking 31:13

But... I already mentioned that. Um... everything about like, friends, I guess. because like in elementary school, when I was like... when this was all starting... I had a lot of friends basically, like my whole class was basically my friend except for like a few really annoying people in the class. And then like... and then, like, once we locked down, I kind of only had like a few friends that I still like, texted and stuff. And then grade seven, I only had like, a few... of those few friends. And then like, I made a few more friends in grade seven. But then, by the end of grade seven, we weren't friends anymore. But then now in grade eight, I have quite a few friends actually. And they're all in like, different classes and stuff. But... so that's just kind of crazy. How much like a pandemic can change, just like something as little and as big as just like, how many friends you have.

Emily Clink 32:22

Yeah, has the pandemic changed anything... I mean, you mentioned how it's sort of harder to make friends almost sort of in the pandemic. And you guys can't be in person together all the time. Has it sort of changed how your family spends time together?

Audrey von Heyking 32:42

Yeah... actually. I think quite a bit. Um... I can't totally remember, because it was two years ago. But I think... like at the beginning of this, not at the beginning of this, but before this, I'd like get home. And I would tell my parents, like, a few good things about my day. Just like a highlight of my day, like, "Yeah, my day was good." Um... and then I would just be like, then I'd like hang out with my friends. And then we'd like... then I'd come back and we'd just have dinner together. And then I'd be in my room or something. But like, now, whenever I get home, like, the first thing that I do is go to one of my parents, whoever's, like, not in a Zoom meeting, and I just tell them every single detail about my day. Um... and then I like hang out sometimes in my room but rarely in my

room. I'll usually hang out like in the living room or in like the kitchen, or just some sort of communal space even if I'm by myself. And I'll just wait for people to come down, and I'll hang out here by myself. And then we'll have dinner. And then I might go up to my room. But like... yeah, I don't know. I feel like we're closer now because we've kind of had to spend more time together. And I also think me and my brother are a bit closer, because we definitely used to fight a lot. My parents say that we don't fight a lot, at least compared to our older siblings. But I definitely remember like... not really enjoying his presence. And we would just bicker all the time, but now we don't fight that much. And lots of the time, like when we're together instead of bickering, we're just like, I don't know, just like talking to each other, or just sitting in the same room. Well, he plays video games, and I'm on my phone, but we're not bickering all the time.

Emily Clink 34:44

Well, thank you so much. Um... unless you have just a couple last comments you want to make at all, I think I'll probably wrap up. But do you have anything?

Audrey von Heyking 34:54

No. I don't think so.

Emily Clink 34:57

Well, thank you so much, Audrey! Thank you so much for doing this. I'm going to stop the recording now, if that works for you.