

Transcript of Interview with Gwyn Hartung by Camryn Blackmon

Interviewee: Gwyn Hartung

Interviewer: Camryn Blackmon

Date: 10/22/2020

Location (Interviewee):

Location (Interviewer):

Abstract: This is an interview with St. Mary's University Public History Graduate Student Gwyn Hartung. Gwyn recently graduated from UTSA with an undergraduate degree in Anthropology and classical studies. She is currently in her first year of graduate school and began it entirely online. In the interview, Gwyn described her first semester of graduate school and how her mental health has been impacted by the combination of COVID-19 and transition to online school.

Gwyn's experience is significant because many students in the fall 2020 semester face various obstacles with maintaining their social lives, productivity with school, and staying physically and mentally healthy.

Camryn Blackmon 0:00

Okay, let me pull up my question. So if you could do the same where you like, introduce yourself and give some information.

Gwyn Hartung 0:09

Sure. Um, my name is Gwen Hartung. I am a first year master's student in the public history program at St. Mary's. But before this, I went to UTSA, where I majored in anthropology and classical studies. I'm living in San Antonio right now. And I have four cats.

Camryn Blackmon 0:34

Okay, and then what are your pronouns?

Hartung, Gwyn 0:36 Oh,
yes, yes. She/her.

Camryn Blackmon 0:39

Okay. Okay, so my first question would be, are you comfortable describing what have you been feeling and what your mental state has been kind of throughout the timeline of the pandemic and like now?

Hartung, Gwyn 0:52

Yeah, for sure. So, um, I have anxiety, I take medication for it. UM there- it's good and bad days. Um, sometimes I really, like, you know, being inside all the time, because I wasn't a

huge fan of going out all the time anyways. But sometimes, you know, I kind of feel a little claustrophobic. And all of this combined with the fact that this is my first year of grad school, and I'm just trying to figure everything out. I have like, imposter syndrome a little bit. My professors have been super, super supportive of me. And I really, really appreciate it. But sometimes I feel like the praise and the support that they give me is, you know, unearned and unwarranted, like, I, I feel like I don't do well enough for them to be so excited about the things that I do. Um, so I've just kind of been suffering from that. Um, but I go through times where I'm like, super productive and like, really on top of things and other times where I'm like, "holy crap that was due today. Well, I gotta go do this right now real quick." So that's generally how it's been.

Camryn Blackmon 2:06

I definitely deal with imposter syndrome as well in so many different ways. But do you think- do you feel that more because it's like your first year of grad school? Like, do you think the pandemic has like, influenced that more? Or do you think you would have that regardless?

Gwyn Hartung 2:23

I think probably regardless, I would feel it, it might be enhanced because of the pandemic, because I can't see anybody in person to get these kind of reassurances. And I always feel like I have so much free time, technically, I guess you could say, so I feel like I don't utilize my time well enough to, you know, to get all of the praise and help that I- that I'm getting. So I'm always just kind of like, "man, would they, would they be saying these nice things about me if we were like on campus right now? Or is it because you know, they're just trying their best and like, encouraging everyone really hardcore right now Because everything is so crappy?"

Camryn Blackmon 3:08

Yeah, no, I definitely understand that. So what factors in your life primarily those influenced by COVID, have had an impact on your mental health?

Gwyn Hartung 3:22

Um, so my boyfriend has a job where they have split the shifts. So he goes in at, he has to be there at five o'clock in the morning. And he gets home around three o'clock in the afternoon or so. And it is a little difficult because I stay up a lot later than he does. And so I don't get to see him as much because he goes to sleep, and then he's gone while I'm awake. And so I miss him. And you know, I'm looking forward to when he can have a more regular schedule, or I can have a different schedule so that we can match better. But right now, it's just, it's a little hard. I'm really glad that they're splitting everything so that there's less people in the office at the same time, but I do miss him when he's gone.

Camryn Blackmon 4:15

Yeah. Um, are you just like primarily a student, or are there other responsibilities that you

have in your life?

Gwyn Hartung 4:25

I am a law fellow, is what they call it, I have a fellowship where we're working with the law library at St. Mary's. So I work 20 hours a week, doing whatever they have me to do. And we have a meeting every week to you know, just kind of sum up what we've done and what our goals are. So I have those responsibilities as well, but I don't technically have to leave the house at all if I don't want to. So it's nice in that aspect, but also you know more, it's a little harder to get feedback because you're not in person.

Camryn Blackmon 5:07

Um, how has the transition impacted your mental health to online school, but especially as like, a graduate student, I don't know if there would be any differences. Um, because you've recently probably graduated from UTSA, and I don't know if you have noticed differences between being a graduate student in general, but maybe differences as like, an online graduate student.

Gwyn Hartung 5:29

Yeah, um, it's definitely different from undergrad. In some ways, it's a little less stressful, because there are less people in the class, you can talk to the professors more in depth. But in other ways, there's a lot of things you have to get done. And so it can be kind of stressful with that. I feel like they are a lot more flexible because we are online, which I find very helpful. I don't know if they're gonna continue to be quite as flexible next semester, if we do online, I hope so. But we'll see. And I don't know, I really, I really have no idea what it would be like to not be, you know, an a, an online graduate student, most of my courses are in the evening. So that is a lot different from what I did as an undergrad, which is pretty nice, because I tend to sleep a little later, which is good, because I really can't function without sleep. Um, so that's one thing that's nice. I'm able to sleep a little later and focus more during the two and a half hour long classes I have to take in the afternoons.

Camryn Blackmon 6:42

That's good. So, have you developed any like, new coping mechanisms? Or do you have any from like prior to COVID that you do utilize during this time?

Gwyn Hartung 6:55

Um, I've been trying to keep a diary. Um, and I've also been trying to do exercises daily with my roommates because they are also in the, you know, they're also are at home right now. So it's a little hard with the diary, I feel a little ridiculous sometimes, like, who even keeps a diary anymore? Um, but I think it would be interesting to look back on these entries while you know, in 10 years or so, when the pandemic is done with looking back at that, and just this year, in general, is just pretty crazy. Um, it's a little harder to keep up with the exercising because I don't really like to exercise very much, but we just try to do things just to stay active. So it's better than just sitting around all day is what we figure.

Camryn Blackmon 7:47

That's really good. Okay, well, that's all the questions I have. Do you have any questions?

Gwyn Hartung 7:54

Um, no, I'm pretty good.

Camryn Blackmon 7:57

Okay, awesome. Thank you so much.

Gwyn Hartung 8:00

Thank you.