

Transcript of Interview with Adam Azzalino

Interviewee: Adam Azzalino

Interviewer: Emily Brunschon

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Interviewer Location: Unknown

Transcriber: Kalissa Reins via Otter.ai

Abstract: Adam Azzalino is a graduate student of history at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. In this interview, Adam discusses how the pandemic has affected his life as a graduate student working on his thesis and his life as a person with a disability. He was living in the dorms at the time of this interview and working on his final thesis project for his program.

Emily Brunschon 00:00

Okay, let's begin with what's your name?

Adam Azzalino 00:04

So, my name is Adam Azzalino. I'm a summer graduate student here at Eau Claire (____??).
Uh and yeah.

EB 00:15

So, you live in Eau Claire, what's the date and time right now?

AA 00:19

The date and time is, let's see, can I even s- it's 12:02 and I think is the - so it's May 13th of 2020.

EB 00:36

So, if you're comfortable telling us some of your demographic information, so age, gender, race, disability, that kind of stuff.

AA 00:48

Okay, I'm 29. I am Caucasian and I have cerebral palsy which is my disability.

EB 01:03

Okay. So, what are some of the primary things you do on a day-to-day basis?

AA 01:10

Um, well right now I'm in the middle of writing my thesis in history so mostly it's doing research for that. And so, it's a lot of looking through documents and that - and that's pretty much my life right now. I'm also starting to write that so it's a lot of sitting at the computer writing most days.

EB 01:34

I feel that so much right now [laughs].

AA 01:39

Yeah.

EB 01:40

Oops, I lost my camera (____???)

AA 01:41

I think I just lost you on the camera there.

EB 01:53

Ahh. I guess while we wait for that, when you first learned about COVID what were your some of your thoughts about it?

AA 02:02

Um, I was kind of watching what was going on over in Italy and how bad it was and I just kind of like had an ominous feeling, I guess so it didn't seem like Eau Claire was really thinking about it at the time. So, I was a little nervous about that. But like, that was my initial reaction was I kind of saw what was happening in Europe first and was - because, I mean, they were having - they're still having a bad time. But - but I mean, I was nervous 'cause it seemed like it was spreading so...

EB 02:44

Yeah how have your (____???) then?

AA 02:50

But and I just - So, can you say that again?

EB 02:52

Um, How have your thoughts changed about COVID versus when you first learned about it?

AA 02:59

How have my thoughts changed about it? Um, I have to think when I talk first [laughs].

I guess that - just that it - that - yeah, yeah, yeah. It became this kind of (___???) as I thought it would be so, I mean - I guess it kind of confirmed my anxieties in the beginning that this might be bad, so.

EB 03:32

And so, you're a grad student, and you just pass your comps, which is awesome.

What was your experience because you were doing your comps right when the pandemic kind of like hit the Wisconsin School System and we started shutting down.

AA 03:51

Right, so the way they did it is completely unprecedented (___???) here in the graduate department because they made us all do it are rooms home on our own computers and ideally, they want you in a testing office so they can observe what you're doing. That's part of the surveillance of education I guess in those kind of exams, but they couldn't do that. So um, I guess they just had to trust everybody that they - they didn't look in the books or whatever, which is unique. I remember Dr. Mann wanted us to come in up until this day at home orders. So, I mean, that change everything, so. I mean, the fact that it's - the fact that I could just go to my own computer and do it and they would just email it to us is kind of strange. And so yeah, it was the fact that it was a whole different kind of process of doing it because they want you in the - they normally do it in the lab that - that's next to the history room so.

AA 05:08

So, everybody had to figure out a new structure for that and so yeah, I mean, that was kind of the feeling of that it was it was just not the way that it was supposed to be. So, it felt a little eerie. So, everybody had to figure out a new structure for that and so yeah, I mean, that was kind of the feeling of that it was it was just not the way that it was supposed to be. So, it felt a little eerie but...

EB 05:20

Yeah. There's a...

EB 05:22

I guess we should clarify what comps are. They're - they're comprehensive tests. That graduate students have to take. I - I haven't done mine. It'll be a while before mine is done.

AA 5:37

Mhm

EB 05:38

But could you explain what the normal comps process is?

AA 05:42

Sure, sure. Um, so comp - er comprehensive exams. They basically make you read about so 30 to 40 books and each of those 10 is in different categories. And then they send you two essay questions that you're supposed to write. Kinda like a mini historiography of the book.

And so, using each of those 10 books in those different categories. The normal process would be that you would go in the testing room that's next to the history lounge and you don't go in there, you don't get any.. I mean, so once you're in there, you don't get any notes. You don't get any - you don't get any notes. You don't get the books in with you. So I mean, it's all from memory because they're kind of just trying to make sure that you understand the literature that you're doing it but - but because of COVID they made us do it from home in our rooms and they would just email us those - the questions. But you get - I think you got a - I think was four hours to do each to do the four questions total that you would get so you get an hour per question really. And you're just writing an essay. That's kind of basically a, like so a literature review of each of those - the 10 books that are in every category that you choose. So, mine were so public history, I did one on surveillance. I did one on the history of so World War One. And and then I did one on the Progressive Era. So that kind of gives you an idea of what it was supposed to be hopefully, so.

EB 07:55

No, that was really helpful [laughs].

AA 07:56

If you need me to clarify anything, let me know. All right.

EB 08:01

If it's [sighs] it's helpful to know not only just for, like, other people generally try not like understand what it is that the graduate process and whatnot but also for me personally because I'm gonna have to do that soon [laughs].

AA 08:15

Yeah, it comes for everyone, so.

But as long as you read the books, you should be able to do what you need to do. If you don't read the books, you're gonna probably struggle a little bit so that's...

EB 08:32

Yeah. And so versus doing it in the testing center and having to do it, you know, at home, do you think it was easier or harder because you're not in that like controlled environment?

AA 08:47

Well, the process itself of actually taking the test and trying to come up with like, to try and answer the questions from memory itself is agonizing and it would have been agonizing thing no matter so where I was. But I mean, I definitely felt more comfortable doing it from home just

'cause you got to be in your own space and I like to get up almost - so whenever I wanted and I didn't have to commute so that was nice, I guess but, um, but I mean, they don't have the - so what we call in surveillance panoptic structure which you have to read Michel Foucault at some point, which is basically you don't know who's observing you and that's - that's kind of Linda's job during the comp process is to make sure that you're not doing anything you're supposed to use and that kind of those kind of like educational structures are kind of gone, so. And it- so I mean, so now having said that there was, I guess, one less level of anxiety, I guess. And it just felt nice that- it just felt nice that I didn't have to walk across the footbridge at like seven in the morning and probably wake up at 6:30. I could almost roll out of bed at like seven and just go take the test and be done. So it was nice. Um, but yeah, I- but you don't feel any less rushed for your time and the anxiety of actually doing the questions didn't change at all, I imagine I probably would have been just as more about the same level of stress about the actual content, so.

EB 10:46

Yeah. So do you think that the doing it at home doesn't really change because there's- there's the stress of it, so it doesn't change, like, I guess the grade, not the grade, but like how well students do on the comps?

AA 11:08

Well, I haven't taken in a look in the actual room. But I think- I think there are multiple people in the room when you do it in that- like there are a couple of people taking comps at the same time. You are and I usually get distracted. So, like I might be thinking about, oh, what's Levi(??) doing over there instead of me just focusing on what I'm doing. So, I'm kind of glad it was just me. I think the original plan for me though was they were gonna do it. I think they were gonna take me over to the disabled services room because they have some private testing rooms and they were like up until they made the decision that people could just do it from home I think they had, so, one person working in the office because they kind of stripped down to essential staff at that time. So, like up until they made the decision that people would do it via email, I was supposed to go in. And then that kind of made me anxious just 'cause I- I'm pretty healthy, but I'm also in a demographic that is risk. So, it just kind of made me nervous about, oh, man, I would have to go out in public and go to the building and stuff. And there was anxiety about that I'm so I'm glad that it worked out the way that it that took off the psychological stress of just having to go onto campus and stuff. So hopefully that makes sense [laughs].

EB 12:47

No, it totally makes sense. It's kind of like a weird, bizarre scenario that ironically, this pandemic, which is really scary and whatnot, might have actually been beneficial for you to get your comps done and be focused and not feel as stressed versus doing it, you know, being watched.

EB 13:09

And being timed, well I mean you were still time but... And so you talked about being at a you know, higher risk for if you were to contract COVID, what are your like specific thoughts and concerns, you know, if you were to by chance contract it?

AA 13:25

[sighs] What are my thoughts if I were to contract it. Well, I am out of network right now with my insurance and everything. I think I'm the treatment or whatever, it's supposed to be free or whatever, but, just the- the fact until I move home next week, I mean, nobody else knows me here in the building. So if I were to catch something, I don't even know who I would call. I'd probably dial 911 or whenever and like, but then you just kind of hoping somebody comes I mean, there's some anxiety there. Just the fact that I don't really know anybody in the building and everybody's gone and stuff that would happen would I even be able to let somebody know is kind of the concern there, I guess. Ah, but but I have some anxiety problems to begin with so this is not helping [laughs].

EB 14:28

Yeah. Yeah, that's probably gotta be really scary then.

AA 14:31

Yeah, yeah. And, but, yeah, I just try not to think about it as much as I can.

I do check in with the news but not a whole lot anymore, because it just makes it seem worse. But, so yeah, I guess those are kind of my initial thoughts about if I were to catch it, but...

EB 14:59

Then- and when you were looking at the news, what were what were the sites or, I guess, news broadcasting that you were looking at?

AA 15:11

I tend to look at- let's see, I'm forgetting everything that I know that I-So mostly PBS or Democracy Now or programs like that or The Intercept, which is a newspaper. There's have some pretty good coverage about what's happening around the world so you kind of get a wider sense on things. But the problem with that is too it's all about New York, so you're kind of getting the worst stuff out of it too. So I mean you're kind of getting your sense of like the worst place so that kind of I suppose ratcheted up my anxiety a little bit too because you're getting- I mean Eau Claire has cases and now that they're doing testing they're increasing but I don't think it's anywhere near as so troublesome at least. Because I mean, Wisconsin there's just not that many people that it can go through, so.

EB 16:19

Yeah. How have you been able to keep up with what's going on in the Eau Claire area?

AA 16:32

I just mainly Google and I see what- I mainly see what- I can't think of the name of the newspaper here think it's The Leader right? Or The Telegram or something? But that one and then I just kind of...I mean and a lot of it is through observation of, like, I guess just seeing what people are doing. So when I go for walks and things like that, and I kind of see, like, are people wearing masks or like, how are they-like acting when I go outside? I mean, those are kind of my two sources there, I guess.

EB 17:23

Yeah. And how do you think that's gonna, you know, with this pandemic- it's kind of unknown what's gonna to happen in the next couple of months. How do you think that's gonna affect the school like you UWEC [University of Wisconsin Eau Claire], like are they- I know one of the California colleges has already declared that they're going online for the fall semester. Do you think that's going to happen at UWEC?

AA 17:52

Yeah, I- I'm hoping they would follow that lead. So my sister lives in Boston. She's actually a PA at a hospital in Boston. She works in the cardiology department there. And so she's not near the COVID stuff, but she pays attention to it 'cause she has, like, some friends that are doing that right now. And she said that I think the Boston State University, or I mean, the state universities in so Massachusetts are already doing that. So I'm just assuming that that's something that's gonna happen probably with the UW system too. But it doesn't affect me very much because I'm doing my coursework. So, so I'm just writing my thesis so it really doesn't like impact my life going online that much. So, the only thing is that I don't have- I don't have so face to face meetings with my advisors and professors. That's kind of the only change there for me, so.

EB 19:08

Have you been able to get in touch with your advisors? You know, have like constructive feedback on your thesis as you're- as you're working on it?

AA 19:21

Yeah, so mostly it's through phone calls and Skype or things like that. And- and I have some trouble talking on the phone just that I seem to get a stutter when I'm on the phone. I think it's- so that's part of my disability is that I do have a nervous stutter sometimes. I think it's more when I can't see people, I get more nervous so it's harder talk or something. And so the phone is not always a great way for me to communicate, but I manage. Because I have trouble holding the phone up to my ear. I have to use speakerphone which, that so that creates some issues. But, I mean, but I've been able to get feedback when it comes and for me it's kind of like it feels like I'm transitioning into the next step a little bit earlier-

EB 20:30

Yeah.

AA 20:31

Than normal and that's really all that's happening because my plan was to move home back to Cedarburg, Wisconsin, where I live at the end to May 'cause my lease was up anyway. So it just kind of feels like I'm being pushed out a little like a little bit earlier. So like, that's kind of- I like I mean, other than the fact that there is a global pandemic in the background and I can't go to restaurants when I go home. It doesn't feel like I'm doing anything that radically different right now than I would be I guess so.

EB 21:11

Yeah. 'Cause especially when- when the thesis, a lot of it's just like sitting down and reading and writing, you don't really interact with people that much, anyways so. Probably not that too much different.

AA 21:25

Yeah, I don't know if you saw that meme that's about grad school, and it's a guy, like holding the pen and and it just kind of like- I think it says grad school and then I looked at the same picture for both pre and post pandemic. That's kind of what it feels like that you're doing exactly the same thing as grad student you know, so.

EB 21:52

Yeah, no, I feel that as-

AA 21:52

So, there's some truth to that one.

EB 21:54

Yeah, um, when we transitioned, I didn't realize I guess just how much of our stuff we've done online. Um, so you know, doing work and whatnot.

AA 22:07

Right.

EB 22:08

It wasn't a huge shift. It was more of just like the shift in our environment more than anything. You talked about your sister working as a cardiologist in Boston had, do you know, and like, what her experience has been or like, are you worried for her if she's in contact with people with Corona?

AA 22:30

I worry that she downplays what's going on. Let me put it that way. Like- like so when she talks about a lot of medical things she tends to kind of disassociate from what's going on. So she's not really telling me or my mom when she talks about it, like, how bad things are or whatever. I

think that's part of- that's part to allay my mom's fears, I think. So I don't really know what she's going through, because she's kind of cryptic about it. But I know that she did mention that there's still doing the kind of cardiac surgeries and things that they need to do in Boston. And, I mean, they all have to wear masks anyway, to do those so I don't think her particular department has changed that much. But I don't think she'd really let me know her own anxieties if she felt them either, so.

EB 23:37

Yeah. And I- I know Illinois has moved I think as a law that if you go out and public, or you're like at stores and stuff, you have to wear a mask. I don't think Wisconsin has moved to that yet. I think it's specific locations where they make you but I don't think it's a statewide thing yet.

AA 23:57

Right. I think you might be right.

EB 24:01

Yeah. Do you know anyone that's gotten sick because of COVID-19?

AA 24:08

Not sick, thankfully, but my friend who lives in so Plymouth, Wisconsin. They work at a Walmart. And I think they were feeling kind of symptomatic of COVID and they had to go to COVID test. But that's- I think it came back negative, thankfully, and they had to go back to work the next day. So, like, you get this giant ball of fear and then you have to go-

EB 24:40

Yeah.

AA 24:41

And I know just from her experiences of kind of venting on social media she's really aggravated that one, people aren't wearing masks, and they go to Walmart and two that she has to go in to sell people Nintendo Switches and Animal Crossing and like she's really aggravated that people just don't download that stuff online so that they don't have to go out. But I think she works in the electronics department so she probably sees more of, like, those unnecessary purchases too, so but.

EB 25:19

Yeah that's been a huge thing. It- Animal Crossing came out like right before everyone started doing lockdowns and whatnot. And so now everyone's stuck at home and they're, you know, playing on their switches and whatnot. And that's been a huge thing for streaming sites and YouTube.

AA 25:38

Right.

EB 25:39

And people, you know, playing Animal Crossing, so I can totally understand that frustration though as a worker. Basically, people get to go home and you know, play on video games or whatnot while they're at work at risk kind of thing. I'm surprised your your friend was able to get a test so easily 'cause that's been a huge thing of the availability for testing.

AA 26:04

Yeah, I don't have any insight into how they got it or anything like that I just kind of so passively see what they post on Facebook but. But- but yeah, I know that that's kind of a problem and I think you- and the interesting thing for me studying surveillance right now is they're talking about they want to do some social tracing with phones and things like that. There are a bunch of telecommunication companies that are actually trying to trace people that have gotten COVID and kind of learn who they came into contact with. And like, that's a big debating, kind of the- I guess- I guess, the surveillance studies community right now, is that kind of infringement on personal liberties? Or is that for the collective- or for the collective good? So...

EB 27:18

Yeah, that could definitely be a slippery slope.

AA 27:23

(____???) Yeah. Which I mean, you need that is kind of my opinion. I think I mean you need that. I mean, that's how they discovered- I think that's how they discovered Typhoid Mary was that they actually just kind of...They went back and they talked to like all the people that she infected and they realized that she was the commonality. So social tracing is kind of a thing that is needed. But the concern is, so let's say that all these tele- like all these telecommunication companies kind of create these relationships with state and local governments to surveil people. So what's put in place to make sure that it is only temporary and that the- that those relationships and that infrastructure doesn't so stick around to be used for other stuff. I mean, that's kind of the danger, but. But- and it's- it's but it's hard to be on the side of studying surveillance and actually root for people to be surveilled, so [laughs].

EB 28:42

[laughs] Yeah.

AA 28:44

It's a contradiction for me, so.

EB 28:46

That's a that's a really interesting- applying like what you're studying right now onto what- what's going on right now. Yeah, I would say that's a very slippery slope. Because it's like you know, people joke about the FBI agent that's watching me on my webcam kind of thing. But then to actually, like be watching people and, you know, following where they're going. And people that they're interacting with could be beneficial, you know, if you're trying to figure out who's been infected, but again, like you said, what are the policies, what are the you know, precautions to be put in so it doesn't continue and be abused in the future?

AA 29:32

Because if you look at the history of kinda surveillance legislation and things like that- so when the Patriot Act, or the Patriot Act was passed in like the early 2000s, there was some concern about it but eventually got accepted and then it kept getting expanded. So there's kind of like this passive acceptance of, of these things that exist you kind of see that with the things that Edward Snowden exposed too, as all that was kind of just moved back into the shadows and we don't know what they're doing. And I think that that's why in the common culture, there's always this joke about the FBI man who's spying on you because they do have that capacity. So, there is a danger of that. And and I don't know, is it- it's a complex question, but I mean, so right now we need to trace people I think. My cousin- my cousin's wife is actually part of that. I've only heard this anecdotally. But apparently she's part of the actual monitoring of people right now and they got them in like this big, I think it's like a lunch room, I don't know where she's working exactly, but I know that they're all looking at people on computers and just making sure that people that are diagnosed are so following the rules. And, and, and I think to the other question that I would bring up is this kind of this- so in the United States you have a lot of individual so rights and liberties and things like that but, uh, so part of the reason that I think so South Korea and all- so China and all these places where they've kind of, that they've basically got it figured out now is because they have a strong central state that can say, "okay, you guys, we're basically gonna do some martial law so you can't go outside. There's actually gonna be penalties." As we see with these protesters, we don't do that, so. So I mean, that's kind of one of the things too that's a contradiction for me is actually like I think in this case a strong central authority that way is a good thing. And obviously you're not getting that from our current administration. It's interesting that we live in a time that the sitting President of the United States said like, "yeah, so why don't we just see if people drink bleach and see what happens?" Like that's something that's never happened before so. So it's just interesting to see the contradictions of how different countries are handling this. And the part about things opening up in Wisconsin that makes me nervous is if you look at Germany right now they tried that and they're seeing a spik in cases again, so. But that being said, I'm not an epidemiologist, so take everything that I say with a grain of salt here, but.

EB 33:14

Well, it sounds like you're not a huge fan of this current administration and then there's been a lot of discourse on the actions or inactions of the federal government. What are your- some of your thoughts on, you know, the- their policies or like what's being said to the public?

AA 33:39

Yeah, I would say that I am in opposition to the current administration in certain ways. I think that it's interesting that- so you're basically seeing a lot of the ideas from the Sanders campaign which is kind of, I would say close to what I identify as in terms of support. So you're basically seeing things like so testing for free. I mean, that comes out of the call for- so for universal health care and the fact that you are seeing these, excuse me, that everybody has these Trump cheques too kind of comes out of- as some of the policies that he's created too but I mean, obviously, because the current administration is kind of, like ideologically opposed to certain policies that he put forth and not going to do enough to actually support people. So I mean, that kind of- so my thought is that we needed to do more than what we're doing in terms of supporting working families and people. 'Cause if you look at, excuse me, Spain right now, they're basically doing a look at universal basic income until the end of the pandemic. And, excuse me, I think that Canada basically gets about \$2,000 a month until the end of this. So there are certain ideas that could be expanded upon that the current administration is not doing and nor do they think are necessary. So I mean, that concerns me but, so yeah.

EB 35:53

How do you think the state level, like Wisconsin, has- like have they done a good job kind of trying to curb the cases or get the aid people need?

AA 36:07

Yeah, I mean, I think they're doing what they can. I think that if- I think if Scott Walker was still governor, you might see some more sympathy towards the economy. And so businesses so we might open up faster than we are. But I mean, of course you have the people on the Republican side that are trying to sue Governor Evers [Governor Tony Evers of Wisconsin] to get the order rescinded. And, I mean, so you do have all these different forces that are kind of at play, but I think he's doing what he can and I'm glad that we have the governor that we do. If it was somebody else, I would be even more nervous but, so yeah, I guess- and I think he's doing what he can to stay at level, I guess.

EB 36:58

Yeah. Do you know how long the stay-at-home order is for Wisconsin? 'Cause I know, you know, in May we heard that they were extending it, or in April, they were extending it into May, but I don't know if they are gonna call it off or if they're going to extend it again.

AA 37:16

I- [sighs] I believe that it goes till so May 26, which is...I don't know what they're going to do. I think that part of that is possibly security theater. By that, I mean that they might extend it again, but if they keep giving people this tangible day, like, you know, May 26th like you just got to make it two more weeks. So people are willing to accept that, right? Because they can see something tangible but it might be more than that. I do know that- so my plan was to go to summer festival Milwaukee and see Dave Matthews Band in summer but that all got canceled. They are moving Summer Fest itself to September. But the band itself decided to move its tour back a year, which is- so I mean, so people are making those kinda decisions. I don't know- like, I mean, obviously people are thinking that it might be more. Who knows it all just depends on kind of who wins this- the battle between the people who want to stay at home and the people that want to shop I don't know how that's gonna play out, but.

EB 38:51

In your opinion, do you think we should continue the stay-at-home order or are you more for kind of like slowly letting people kind of out and opening up businesses?

AA 39:01

I'm not a politician. But, so I would hesitate to take anything that I say with any real value, but I think that it might be longer than people think I'll just say that. I think that we should stay at home at least until we have some mass testing, which right now we don't, but. Because then you can just like every time you go out or whatever you get to test I don't know how that would work but but I mean, that's how places like so South Korea have been able to kind of recover, is they're doing some of those things. So in a crisis like this I think you need to adopt kind of what's working for other people, but. But anyway, yeah, I know you kinda wanted to talk about how it's kind of affecting me as a disabled person a little bit more too, right? Is that kind of somewhere near...?

EB 40:08

Yeah, I guess what are- I guess what are any of your thoughts or experiences? You know, you're living alone on campus I believe, right?

AA 40:19

Yeah, I'm on so Water Street in the student housing building Aspens Mogensen [Hall]. And I guess the big noticeable change for me is- yeah, like it's pretty much just me in here. I have a care worker that comes so once a week and they do laundry and they pick up some groceries for me. The biggest challenge for me is so being able to find those groceries because so normally I'd shop at so Woodman's [Woodman's Market] but because of the stay-at-home order there are no so- like everybody is doing that so all the pick up spots for, like, to pick up groceries are gone every week so I've been having to go to Festival Foods and there have been a couple- so right as this- as the pandemic was starting I had just trouble finding a store that I could send them to pick

up my groceries 'cause everybody was so pilfering everything like toilet paper and things like that, so. So, for a while I had some anxiety of even trying to get food. There were a couple days that I had to order some burgers and freeze them just 'cause I wasn't sure that I was gonna be able to find groceries that week, so. I don't like going to Festival Foods, I don't like supporting the giant big grocery stores like that. I'd rather do Woodman's 'cause they're locally owned and stuff. But, so I mean, that's been a lifestyle change for me and...So having a care worker, that's also an anxiety 'cause I- like they go from different shifts and different so people all the time and you hope that they're practicing social distancing but you don't know where they're going outside of your shift, where they do your laundry. So, I mean, there's kind of a concern is "oh are they wearing a mask? Are they doing what they're supposed to do?" so they don't get you sick. So, I mean, that's kinda been a worry too. Thankfully, the person I have now I know that they're doing what they're supposed to do. But the person before that I don't think they quite understood what was going on. So, I mean, so that gave me a lot of anxiety. And if they were- like if they were cleaning in this room I'd be in the next room and I'd make sure that I was away from them. I- just because that's kind of changed the whole dynamic that way, so.

EB 43:07

Yeah, I remember the toi- the food shortage and people that were like buying and bulk and whatnot when this pandemic first started coming out 'cause everyone was so scared of being stuck at home. I totally get that that was very difficult for you to find food. And I remember you posting on Facebook about the amount of like frozen dinners you were buying and people judging you about it.

AA 43:33

Yeah.

EB 43:34

But it's like [laughs] it's like that was accessible food for you. It's food that you can keep for a long time.

AA 43:39

Right.

EB 43:40

It's not that many fast food dinners [laughs].

AA 43:43

Yeah, so I don't have any physical cooking skills. I have a- I can basically make an egg and that's about it.

EB 43:51

[laughs]

AA 43:52

So, I mean, I'm kinda stuck with- with frozen dinners and all the stuff with high sodium and whatever. But I mean, yeah, so I'm just buying what I need for the week which is about 21 and yeah, people always comment that it's a lot but that's probably my main source of food when I'm living alone. And so when I go back home I'm gonna start to try to cook a little bit more but part of it is I've never had an ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] stove that I can roll under and do some cooking. So I've never really had the opportunity to try. So, I mean, yeah my goals for the year were completely different so was everyone else's. But I was gonna stop using those delivery apps and try to do cooking on my own and learn some skills but that didn't happen 'cause...And part of my coping mechanism of this pandemic is just ordering all the trash food you're not supposed to eat like pizzas [laughs]. Yeah, I don't think anybody's gonna have a summer body in June, so.

EB 45:05

[laughs] No.

AA 45:06

Nobody needs to worry about that [laughs].

EB 45:07

Everyone was like, you know, they get their New Years resolutions and "I'm gonna be fit this year" and you know, and then COVID hits and it's like buying fast food is like the only way you can get out of the house kinda thing.

AA 45:22

Right.

EB 45:23

Or, like, to have any food sometimes. And you can't go to the gyms or anything and I'm sure for most people it's really hard to stay motivated to like exercise and whatnot on your own. So, yeah, I totally get that.

AA 45:40

Yeah, yeah, that's part of what my lifestyle has changed too is that I used to have a personal trainer here at the University- oh there goes my eye [laughs]. I used to have a personal trainer here at the Crest Center and they would help me work 'cause I was trying to get- trying to walk more and I can walk, I use a walker, but, but I mean they closed the gym down because [electronic beeping noise]oh- that's my chair beeping. Whoops, I left that on. Yeah, that's just my battery dying. [sighs] Of course my eye has to start during the middle of this. Anyway, so yeah, where was I? But I mean 'cause of the gym closing down she had to stop so I'm trying to lift weights and walk on my own but...So part of it is so when I exercise I need help. It's hard for me to actually maintain like the amount of time you need to burn calories just on my own

without somebody supporting me so, I mean, that's- so I've had to kind of give up the dream of being in shape for a little bit, but...

EB 46:53

Yeah.

AA 46:54

So [sniffs] question.

EB 46:56

And so, you know, you're gonna be-

AA 47:00

Sorry, it's my stupid allergies.

EB 47:05

[laughs] You're finishing up your thesis and whatnot, how do you think that's- and you're gonna get out into the job field, how do you think that's gonna affect your ability to, you know, basically secure a job, especially in the history field?

AA 47:21

Yeah, well, my mom and I talk about this. She's a guidance counselor at Marquette University High School and they're hiring so guidance counselors through Zoom and stuff right now 'cause they need...I think she- I think she's the one left in her department so they need people to be guidance counselors. But she thinks because, like her school, being a private school, is doing hiring that everyone else is and there's some tension with like, so "why are you looking for museum jobs right now?" And that's because nobody's posting anything because we're in the middle of a global pandemic. I think it's interesting how the museum like industry will be affected. A lot of people are doing more online things. Like a lot of so local museums that I follow, there's one in Sheboygan [Wisconsin], they have their curator. They kind of doing like a bit blog every day and so you like- "so here's how we assess items" and things like that. But there are some inside track things that people probably wouldn't get that aren't in the industry that people think are cool. But they're having- they're becoming a public facing to keep people interested and kind of talking more about the day to day operations of how a museum would work under normal conditions. And like how they're changing too, which is interesting 'cause everybody's having to start like a bit blog or something these days. So, but, yeah I'm kinda nervous about...I guess I don't know when people are gonna start hiring again and there's just the- there's this expectation from my family that once you graduate or whatever you go off and get a job and if don't kind of do that you're not doing the right thing. And they don't quite understand that it takes time. So it's always fun tension in my family, but [laughs] I'm sure you get some of that in your own way too, but.

EB 49:34

Yeah.

AA 49:35

But anyway.

EB 49:35

So, if you were to get a job, you know, after this kinda pandemic has settled, would you be willing to do more of that technology-based stuff like, you know if people weren't able to get to museums?

AA 49:49

Yeah, I mean I have- so right before all this started I was so I was working with so Greg Kocken in the archives. And I helped them develop a student manual for interns about like, so things that they would post on, so Facebook to keep audiences interested. I mean, I kinda went through like basically like, so basically like, "so here's how you create a fact of a day kind of thing" or like "here is how you post a photograph on social media", things like that. And I think they might, like as the time goes on they might rely on that kind of model a little bit more that they are kind of just the social media based organizations for the time being. You're kind of seeing that with the archiving project that you're doing right now is too, that all goes online right. 'Cause there is a way to create a museum exhibit out of it right. I think the original plan was to do something with a museum right? So.

EB 51:01

Yeah, so the public history class that I'm in, we were originally working with Irvine Park up in Chippewa Valley. And we were working on exhibits for the new welcome center that had been built and so we were gonna try to fill it with artifacts and information about Chippewa Valley and, kind of, like the greater global history of like the logging industry because the William Irvine, er Irvine, he was a logging baron that kind of became a conservationist and that's why the park is- was saved is because of him and it's always free. And then COVID hit and so we couldn't, you know, meet up with the rest of the class and discuss ideas and whatnot and we couldn't set up the exhibit. So then we kind of switched gears to this rapid response recording people's experiences and like documents and images to basically get a snapshot of what's going on during this time. I think they- there's, I mean, rapid response isn't a new thing it's- they did one for like Ebola. They've done it for like other major diseases that have come out so, but I think it's kind of a unprecedented thing for like our generation.

AA 52:36

Right.

EB 52:37

And it's definitely gonna kind of be in the history books. So it's really important to document this at this point.

AA 52:44

Yeah. And so I guess just to talk about how this has changed my process, so when I was- I'm also working with Greg on this exhibit that was supposed to be about how the university dealt with the impact of the ADA so when that passed in 1990, that was supposed to be a library exhibit and they were gonna use a few cases but apparently that's all transitioning online now. And he's kinda figuring that out so it's gonna take a different form so even the research I'm doing for that is changing. And two, to get back to my thesis work, that's- I basically got pushed into writing about two, three months earlier than I wanted to because all the archives closed. So my original plan was to go through two, three more newspapers on microfilm and kind of find some more sources over May, I mean over April and May. But, because of the pandemic all the archives shut down. So I can't get to those sources. So now I'm kind of being pushed right with what I have which is in some ways it's good, it's a motivator. I probably would have agonized over what I don't have the entire time but- but it kind of feels like I've had to let some things go in terms of my research and just kind of focus on what I have. So that's kind of changed so what I can write and what I can write with and it's- I guess I've had to change my perspective about how deep my research goes a little bit too, so.

EB 54:33

Yeah, how has it like effected your source accessibility? Like, you know with archives closing, but also like trying to get books and stuff from- so UW has a system that allows you to loan books from other universities within the UW system and that's been pretty much shut down as well 'cause we- the libraries closed.

AA 54:57

Mhm.

EB 54:58

So, you've been, have to, pretty much, access everything online. How is that-, that's pro- that's negatively affected thesis work?

AA 55:07

Yeah, so there's one book that I mentioned in my historiography that I realized that I didn't get a scanned copy of. So, I don't have a copy of it so if they ask me to- to do more of that particular sect- er as that particular book in my historiography I'm not gonna be able to comment on it and I know I'm gonna have to find a copy of it somehow. Because all the libraries are closed. So, and for me luckily I guess cuz I have some issues with my eyes, I just have lower vision, of I mean that's not like diagnosed or anything but it's just that- so basically using audiobooks and having the Kindle read out loud to me is a lot easier than trying to read this whole book for me. I retain

more that way anyway. So luckily a lot of the books I used for my comprehensive exams happen to be books that I needed for my thesis anyway. I kinda planned that using the critical thinking skills of graduate students.

EB 56:26

[laughs]

AA 56:27

And so I got a lot of those books scanned ahead of time so, and then a lot of the other ones I own on Kindle so luckily I'm in a pretty good spot. There are just a few rare books that- or two or three that I can't get to that I may not be able to cite or may not be able to read until libraries open back up again. There's one that's in digital form but the Kindle book is \$90 and I don't know if I wanna pay \$90 for the ebook. Yeah, welcome to academic publishing that's the only place that the ebook costs probably 40% more than the actual book, so [laughs].

EB 57:09

Yep, nope, I get that. I had the same issue. I'm writing a historiography and all the books that I were- that I was gonna access, I couldn't afford so I tried finding them online and it's like, you know, \$80, \$55, and I'm like, I can't afford that [laughs].

AA 57:30

Well, when I'm not being recorded I can talk to you more deeply about what you could do. But, 'cause I have some ideas but I don't wanna say things here [laughs].

EB 57:42

[laughs] That's fine. I guess we could just kind of end with, you know, how do you think this is affect our future? You know, is there gonna be a new normal that comes out?

AA 57:55

Yeah, I- I don't think that you're going on a thesis track right? Or are you or?

EB 58:02

No, thank god, no [laughs].

AA 58:05

Yeah, that makes me wonder about like Shane and those other guys that are just-, er so guys I mean in the sense of people, who are just beginning on this journey- so journey of writing a thesis. And like, so normally this would be the time that you would go do an archive and you would look for sources but if they're not online you can't get to them. So, you don't have that experience of going to the archives and actually looking through stuff so is everyone just gonna have to do some kind of digital thesis where they can only use online documents? We don't know. So that's gonna change at least probably some of the criteria that people are judged on that

way. And I think that maybe a lot of classes that weren't online might be offered online now because they have to come up with the infrastructure. That concerns me a little bit just 'cause the neoliberalism of education they look for ways to cut corners and like administration costs. But anyway, so if you don't have to pay for a physical building for students to go in, I mean are there gonna be less traditional classes as time goes on? We don't know. But that's kind of one of my fears about it. That this crisis is kinda basically lead to a reduction the face-to-face kind of model 'cause like everybody's learning how to do it. So I guess that's kinda one of my anxieties there, but.

EB 01:00:01

Yeah, no, I- that's totally valid I- that's been a huge concern. A lot of businesses are going-making- allowing workers to go completely online and I think already professors now in our university have started talking about doing more online classes, so.

AA 1:00:19

Yeah, I mean that's one of the upsides is as a disabled person I think too, is that there's kind of, there's kind of a stigma like employment for people that are other disabled, need accommodations. Some bosses they tend to fight you on- some bosses will fight you on making accommodations under the ADA that you need. Luckily I haven't had the experience but I've heard of other people that have had those troubles. But so we're seeing with the pandemic that so people can work from home and they can get these online supports and that's something that's hopeful for the future if the- so disabled people can work from home. And hopefully people realize that those kind of accommodations are made possible. I was lucky that the one boss that I- so one of my bosses actually encouraged me to work from home so I didn't have to come in most days which was- so I mean but for a lot of disabled people that aren't at the peak of their health so working from home is important so that they can get employment and the services that they need [dog barks]. And at least I think we're seeing that that's possible through this crisis. So hopefully the consciousness around that changes, I guess.

EB 01:01:57

Yeah, I think that is all the questions that I have to ask you. We got through what I wanted to get through and you know you sharing your experience and what's going on for you has been really helpful and I think it'll educate people not only, like, what you're going through but as people in the future will see what it was like during this pandemic. So, thank you.

AA 01:02:24

Yeah, thanks this has been great. I'll talk to you later.

EB 01:02:28

[laughs]

AA 01:02:29

Alright, take care though.

EB 01:02:31

Yeah.

AA 01:02:32

I think you might have to do it [laughs].

EB 01:02:34

[laughs]