

Transcript of Oral History with Annalyse Maria Stratton

Interviewee: Annalyse Maria Stratton

Interviewer: Joseph Alvis Richard Stratton

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Location of (Interviewee): Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Location of (Interviewer): unknown

Interview Technology: Zoom

Abstract: Annalyse Stratton was born in Marsh field, Wisconsin and grew up in Colby, Wisconsin. She works at Grace Lutheran Communities as a child care teacher. In this interview Annalyse shares how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected her, her family and her friends as well as her thoughts on the pandemic itself. She shares what it has been like to work during these difficult times and also shares what she thinks that we can do moving forward. Finally she touches on the politics of the situation and how we can learn from it.

Joseph Stratton 00:00:00

Hello, I am Joseph Stratton and I am 22 years old I am conducting an oral history with my wife Annalyse. In the US right now, the current coven statistics are there are 414,796,237 cases and 282,214 deaths. Anna, would you like to introduce yourself.

Annalyse Stratton 00:00:35

Yeah. So, my name is Annalyse Stratton, I am a junior at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, I am majoring and unified early childhood education and I am 20 years old.

Joseph Stratton 00:00:51

So at this point I will know the date and time to it is December 7 at 6:42pm. Um, do you mind sharing a little bit of like your demographic information.

Annalyse Stratton 00:01:06

Yep, so I am Latino and Caucasian.

Joseph Stratton 00:01:13

What's your age, gender, if you mind sharing.

Annalyse Stratton 00:01:16

I'm 20 years old and I'm a female. Is there anything else you like to know like that?

Joseph Stratton 00:01:23

That's it for that part. What are the primary things that you do on a day-to-day basis?

Annalyse Stratton 00:01:31

Um, so, on a day-to-day basis. I'm usually at work, especially since the this past March, I've been working quite a bit during the days because at my childcare program I work out, we started doing an all-day option for childcare. So, I've been working a lot and a lot of schoolwork. I am I've been full online this whole semester. So I've gotten a lot of hours in at work and a lot of time I've been doing homework.

Joseph Stratton 00:02:06

Oh, if you don't mind sharing too what childcare place do you work.

Annalyse Stratton 00:02:13

I work for Grace Lutheran communities.

Joseph Stratton 00:02:19

And I guess the next question would be, where do you live?

Annalyse Stratton 00:02:25

I live in Eau Claire

Joseph Stratton 00:02:30.300

What would you say it's like here in Eau Claire? If you just were to sum it up in a couple of words or a couple sentences.

Annalyse Stratton 00:02:37.500

I think Eau Claire's a very artsy town. I think that in terms of like politics we lean more on like the Democrat Democrat slash liberal side. I just, I think it's a really good town.

Joseph Stratton 00:02:56

Um, when you first learned about Covid, what were your thoughts about it?

Annalyse Stratton 00:03:02

Honestly, at first, I didn't really think much of it. I didn't really know much about what was going on. I didn't see very much in the news when it first started, and I think now, especially I've gotten a lot better about keeping track of what's going on in the news, but yeah. First, I definitely thought it wasn't as big of a deal as it turned out to be, but so.

Joseph Stratton 00:03:26

Would you say your thoughts on it have changed quite a bit.

Annalyse Stratton 00:03:29

Oh, absolutely. I think that, especially with work I'm seeing all the precautions we've had to take and, you know, seeing all the different viewpoints on it. I think that at the end of the day, it is a pandemic. And I think that we have to take it seriously, regardless of, you know, how we feel about it.

Joseph Stratton 00:03:53

Um, what issues have concerned you about the Covid pandemic, the most would you say?

Annalyse Stratton 00:04:01

My main concern is, well, I have two main concerns. My first one, well not my first. I don't really have them in order. But one of the concerns I have is how you know there are a lot of people, it seems like that aren't willing to try and do their part and help take care of people. You know, even, and I understand that it's hard to see past like your small circle of your own life. But I think that at the end of the day, we have to take care of each other and that includes people we don't even know. And so, you know, just because it doesn't affect your life directly doesn't mean that it isn't a serious for someone that lives next door to you or across the street from you or across town, and I think that it's pretty concerning to see the lack of compassion. And I think another concern is just how many lives we've lost and how many lives have been impacted by this you know. It's it's scary to see how things have changed. And, you know, just driving past like where the food drives are and stuff like how many more people are there and all the hospitals and how full they are. It's just, it's pretty sad, and I think that it, that all comes back to the whole compassion thing that we're lacking in it. And I think that it really shows that it really shows some people's character. I think at the end of the day, so.

Joseph Stratton 00:05:35

Um, so you mentioned that you work in a child care position. So has COVID affected your job would you say?

Annalyse Stratton 00:05:46

Oh yeah, absolutely. I started working for my program, I think, about a year and two months from two months ago. So a year in two months and I started out my average hours at work were 12 and now I'm working about 25 hours a week and we have a lot more sort of precautions going on. Like, you know, the kids have to, you know, not use the communal toys anymore. We have to you know, constantly be sanitizing everything, including our hands, the toys, markers everything we had to divide a lot of things up. And I also think that just with all day care, especially when the pandemic got pretty bad in March and we had a little bit of that shut down. We saw definitely we definitely saw a lot of like increase in the need for childcare, but then a huge dip in it too. I think that because a lot of parents ended up working from home. But in terms of the kids. I think that I definitely saw a lot of struggles, especially in that March time, you know, they, they weren't used to online school and things were getting crazy. And even now with, you know, the back and forth in between. You know, being at school and being at home like from quarantine or just the school shutting down itself, it's, it's a lot to put on kids especially our younger ones, but we're making it through. And I think that it's great that I work for a program that you know, reached out to all our families and said like, hey, if you want to come during the virtual days like for us to help them, that's been really useful. And I think that it's a great learning experience for me and my co workers because majority of us are education majors. So having that experience in kind of being thrown into helping them learn their schoolwork, and kind of working a little bit with their teachers online, it's, it's been a great experience. And I think that um you know the pandemic is bad, but I think that there are small blessings that I can hold on to.

Joseph Stratton 00:08:06

Um. So, since all of this has changed with your work and whatnot, since the beginning. Has the pandemic changed your employment status?

Annalyse Stratton 00:08:19

Um not quite my employment status. I'm still I'm still considered a childcare teacher but you know some certain things have changed. So now I you know I learned how to drive one of those shorter buses, so that we can transport the kids from our [inaudible] schools. And so that's been an interesting thing to learn and like I said earlier, just just having to figure out almost how to teach without actually being fully a teacher yet, which has been super interesting. And I think that the way teachers are handling it are super, they're doing a super job like they're, it's just incredible. The way that they're able to You know, communicate the instructions of everything and it makes it a lot easier for me and my co workers and probably a lot of parents too. So I think that it's awesome that teachers are adapting to the online learning. And you can really tell which ones are really embracing it. And, you know, trying to make the best out of the situation.

Joseph Stratton 00:09:24

So you said it hasn't really affected your employment status, but it's affected certain aspects of your job. Has the pandemic effective employment of people that you do know, besides yourself?

Annalyse Stratton 00:09:38

Um, yep. I know a few people who have, you know, had to start working from home. I know some people have, You know, been a little bit worried about their jobs. And honestly, sometimes you know I get a little worried about, you know, we haven't had to shut down our program yet, but I just, you know, sometimes you never know what's going to happen and depending on, you know, cases in our program and stuff, you know, things could things could change any minute.

Joseph Stratton 00:10:12

So, um, how has Covid would you say affected you and your family's day-to-day activities?

Annalyse Stratton 00:10:21

Hmm. Well, for me, like I said, I've been working a lot more which I am grateful for. I'm grateful for the experience. I've had some family who started working from home. Day to day though i think that you know I live pretty much the same way I did before. Besides going out, you know, I don't you know, go many places I usually only am at my house or at work. That's pretty much it. Which honestly it's not that much different from what I did before. But yeah, I think in terms of my family. I had a lot of family members who were, they did like to go out and have a good time. And I've had to see them, you know, kind of hold back and not do that anymore. And I am, I've also seen a lot of my family who has decided that they don't want to stop doing that. And I think that, you know, at the end of the day people are going to make their own decisions. But I just really hope that you know they find it in their hearts to say like, it's time to slow down and help the virus slow down itself. So, but, yeah, in terms of, you know, just myself not much has really changed.

Joseph Stratton 00:11:45

So then, I guess moving on to the next question here. How are you managing your day to day since things have changed so drastically? Even if like your day-to-day activities haven't changed too much. How are you managing what has changed?

Annalyse Stratton 00:12:04

Yeah, so, um, in terms of going online for my schooling. At first it was a huge curveball. For me, I am a, I'm a really detailed learner. I like having that extra detail about what I'm learning and having to transition online and, you know, watching pre recorded lectures or, you know, having to do a zoom call like this for a lecture, it, it was difficult at first. I think especially because not only were the students at the university having to figure it out, but also the professors. And so I think that now that things have started to, you know, we've been online for a while now and a lot more people are getting used to it and i think it's it's slowly become a lot better than it started out as. Um, but yeah, I think that with work, it's been great. My bosses have been really good about making sure that we're having enough time to do our classes and our schoolwork, and you know we have a little bit of a back room where our Altoona all day location is so you know if we do need to do work, we can go back there and they're just it's a really, they're really accommodating to what you need. And I think that that's been a really great thing to have, especially right now.

Joseph Stratton 00:13:26

So, kind of in looping back to family a bit. Um, has the outbreak of Covid it affected how you associate and communicate with friends and family?

Annalyse Stratton 00:13:38

Oh yeah, for sure. Um, you know, and it just in terms of my parents. They live about an hour away and I really haven't seen them much. Once in a while I'll see them. And, you know, we've done a little bit of a sometimes we see each other from a distance, or sometimes, you know, like in like if they travel because some of my family's been traveling, like I'll wait a while before I go see them, stuff like that. But for the most part it's been a lot less than I used to. And in fact, I just I go a lot of weeks or months questioning, if I'm going to see them soon or not, which at the end of the day it doesn't bother me as much as I thought it would. And I think it's because I go back to that whole compassion thing I have to think about, you know, people surrounding me and the people that I don't even know. And I have to put my heart out for them. And I think that that's given that's mean me and learn a lot about you know, it is good to be selfless sometimes. To be selfish. It's, it's great to take care of yourself. But I think that when it comes to a pandemic, you have to take care of each other. So.

Joseph Stratton: 00:14:50

So since the beginning of all of this, what would you say is the some of the biggest challenges you've personally faced?

Annalyse Stratton 00:15:00

The biggest challenges. Probably biting my tongue. That's been pretty difficult for me and I'm the kind of person that you know I want people to know my opinion. But I think that there comes to a point where people are going to believe and think what they want to think and at the end of the day, all I can do is make sure that I know where my head is and where my heart is and I can't

control anyone else. And that's been really hard for me, you know. For example, being a student at AuClaire and seeing how many of my peers are, you know, going to the bars without masks. It's very disappointing for me. I think that you know, we're young adults, but we are at the end of the day, at the end of the day, we are adults. And so if we're only thinking about ourselves, especially during a pandemic, or being childish. And I think that, you know, you have to, you really have to put yourself in other people's shoes and that's a really hard thing sometimes because you you get so focused on the things that are wrong going on in your life because of this, but We really can't be doing that. And so having to bite my tongue and just say, you know what, I can't control other people, that's been a big challenge for me. And I think another one has been just not not necessarily not seeing my family, but just not knowing you know what's going to happen tomorrow or the next day and I I have had a lot of family who have had covid. And oh, it scares me scares me to death. You know, you never know how it's gonna affect your body and you know I I read about all these cases where someone's as healthy as they can be or young or they're they're active and it really affects their body. And I think that you never know what it can do to you and it's it's very scary to hear about especially family getting it and friends. It's, it's very nerve-wracking. So that's been pretty hard to

Joseph Stratton 00:17:16

That, that's for sure. So I guess a little bit on a little lighter note, um, what have you. What have you and your family done for recreation during this pandemic when we're all stuck inside, for the most part?

Annalyse Stratton 00:17:30

Oh my goodness. So I've done a lot of Facetiming with my mom and I'm one of those people where I talked to my mom every single day and you know she drives me crazy. But I can't imagine not talking to her for one day. So a lot of FaceTime calls I've learned how to play poker, I played a lot of Yahtzee. Um, you know, I like to go for a walk. So that's been another thing, you know, walking, just even around the block once or twice and stuff like that. So yeah, stuff like that. And I think that it's been a great time to catch up with you. I think that, you know, our first year being married, we were so busy with school and everything. So having that extra time to You know, spend time with you and learn new things with you, cooking with you. It's been really great. I think that you know, if you do live with someone. During this time, you know, you can dwell on the fact that you can't go out and you know go meet up with some of your friends. But it also could be a great opportunity to say, well, I'm gonna, you know, become even closer with the people I'm living with or I'm gonna start calling people more. Or I'm going to learn how to knit or something. I think that if you look at it at more of a positive angle, rather than some people have been looking at it as so many things are taken away. But if you look at it from an angle of, I'm given the opportunity to try new things, it's, it can be a really great thing. And I think that could help a lot with our cases. If people would just not dwell so much on, you know, well, I'm going to go out and I'm going to wear. I'm not gonna wear a mask. Well, then we're going to be stuck like this for a very long time. So just try new things.

Joseph Stratton 00:19:23

So in now kind of going into more of health aspects of the pandemic, um, have you or anybody that you know gotten sick with Covid during this outbreak?

Annalyse Stratton 00:19:36

Yep. So I've had quite a few family members who have gotten sick. I myself have not gotten sick with Covid. I'm very surprised about that because of work, but honestly, my work, either we I don't. I think we've only had one positive case and that was at a school location and so. That's very exciting for me to know that, you know, I've been, you know, doing my part, and it's it's paid off. So that's been good. But yeah, I have had a few family members who have gotten sick so

Joseph Stratton 00:20:12

So then, in what ways do you think that Covid is affecting people's mental health or physical health too even people who don't get it?

Annalyse Stratton 00:20:23

Yeah, so, um, mental health wise, I think that, you know, there are a lot of people who thrive on their social life. And I think that it's probably been really hard for them and I feel for them and I I'm really I feel bad that they're going through such a, you know, it is kind of a dark time and so. But it's like I said earlier, if you really just try and take your, take this time to try new things and you know experiment. It could be a really great thing. And I think that there are a lot of like options. I know on campus where you know, there's like virtual counseling and stuff like that. But in terms of people I know. I haven't really heard of anyone in my family or friends who have been having a hard time mentally with this. Physical health, I mean everyone that I know who have had, who has had Covid has recovered pretty well from it. So that's, that's really good. Um, but yeah, I think that um it's a great time to get your body moving and I think even though we can't, you know necessarily go to the gym. We want to at least we can go outside and go on a walk or we can do a fun at home workout. I think that it's a great opportunity to start trying that kind of stuff.

Joseph Stratton: 00:21:47

I agree with that. Um, so kind of now and moving to the next topic. And uh well contested topic at that. What have been your primary sources of news throughout this pandemic?

Annalyse Stratton 00:22:02

Um, I, I try my best to mostly just look at the CDC website. It's something like, for example, Facebook has been, it's been difficult to go on. There's just so many different you know news sources and some pretty sketchy ones that I've seen some of my friends and family share. And I'm like, Come on. Did you even read it? Did you even read the whole article? But yeah I try and just steer away from that and, you know, kind of keep with my local news and you know, like I said, the CDC website. You've been a great source of someone who can give me good information and accurate information. So that's been really helpful. Stuff like that, you know,

Joseph Stratton 00:23:00

So have your new sources changed over the course of the pandemic, or have they remained pretty much the same?

Annalyse Stratton 00:23:07

Um, I would, I would say that it's, it's hard to say because like I said at the beginning of this, I wasn't a very good I wasn't very good at, you know, keeping an eye on the news and stuff. It just was never one of those things that I had looked at, but now it seems like you know it's it's a lot of Covid information. And I think that it's a good thing that you know it's out there and people are given a chance to know about what's going on. But yeah, I don't, I'm not necessarily sure if I can say if it's changed or not just because I didn't really look at the news much before that.

Joseph Stratton 00:23:50

So what do you think are some important issues that the media is or is not covering?

Annalyse Stratton 00:23:57

I think that Um, I would say that there's just a lot of media out there that is not quite accurate. And I think that that's more harmful than good. And I've seen a lot on like my Facebook and Instagram, stuff like that. Twitter. There have been like little icon saying like, like you can go to this website to see if this is an accurate source or not. And that's been really good to see. I think that, you know, it's one of those things where you really, you have to look at the website and you have to look at the source, you're getting it from and you know it's and that's hard to, you know, ignore one of those Facebook shares that says that Covid's fake and whatnot it, you know, they look real. But it's not real, so that is more harmful than good to to be sharing things like crazy before actually really looking into the source you're sharing because you know. Like I said, not a lot of people want to go and check and see if there's source is accurate. And I think that, you know, that could that could change someone's mind about how precaution that they're being and that could do a lot of harm. So

Joseph Stratton 00:25:19

So kind of ushering into the next kind of idea here. So how have the local like municipal municipal leaders or government officials and your community, how they responded to the pandemic?

Annalyse Stratton 00:25:38

I mean it's it's hard for me to say, I think that everyone. Well, almost everyone is trying to rush to stay on top of things and you know really be precautinate, I know that. This is kind of going a little off topic, but the Chancellor at Eau Claire, I think, has in my opinion, and there are a lot of people who have different opinions about this, but I think that a lot of people are claiming that it's about safety first. But their actions are not really showing that. So, you know, going back to campus same February, February, you know we're going back to campus after everyone's been home for the holidays and for our j term. And so, you know, that's not really taking our safety has the number one priority. And I think that it has a lot to do with money. And I think. And I understand that, you know, the university needs money and everything like that. But at the end of the day, I just, I don't think it's right to claim that safety is number one, and then do something completely opposite of being safe. I think that it's silly and the whole Spring Break thing. I understand where their thought was, but I think that it's you know it's like I said, we're gonna, you know, have long weekends and then or we're not going to have those long weekends like they said. But we're going to come back in February and it's going to be a lot of people who are traveling from home, and it's just, I just don't think that the reasoning for it made much sense. So

Joseph Stratton 00:27:21

So, in comparison now, do you have any thoughts on how like local, state, or federal leaders are responding differently to the pandemic?

Annalyse Stratton 00:27:32

Yeah, I think that um You know, our leaders seem to have a lot of different ways that they're handling it. I think that I I'm pretty disappointed, honestly, and how our president has been handling the situation and I'm hopeful for our next president and hopeful that he will take it in his hands, and really, you know, get it under control. I think that it became so political and it became this huge thing that, it became so political and I think that that that is so wrong. This is the health and safety of our of the citizens and for making it into a political, you know issue and there is no room for that there. And I think that it's, you know, if you have the president, let's say, and the President says this virus is fake or says things along those lines all of his, you know, Followers not necessarily followers, but all people that really support him, they're going to believe that. And that's why we're still here. That's why we're still you know, on our second wave and we're you know we possibly could go into a third wave. And I think that it really shows that you know somebody's words and actions, especially a leader has a huge impact on how things play out. And I think that if our president would have taken the seriously right away and said everyone needs to do their part, stay home wear a mask follow all the rules that the scientists are telling us. I truly do not think that we would be here where we are today. I think that things will be a lot more positive. I think that you know, our cases would we down. I think that we would, you know, slowly be able to start, like, you know, getting back to normal. And at this point I think that we're far from normal and I don't necessarily know if our normal will be the same normal we knew before. And I think this could have been avoided. I absolutely do think it could have been avoided.

Joseph Stratton 00:29:50

So on to our last little topic here. How has your experience transformed how you think about family, friends, community?

Annalyse Stratton 00:30:06

It's changed a lot. I think that in terms of family, I think that, especially around now the holidays, my main thing is family means caring and supporting each other. And if that means I have to do it from home, absolutely. You know, I have, you know, nieces and nephews, I have family members. I have some family members who have underlining conditions. And I think that I, I just want to make sure that they're safe and I want to make sure that loved and my way of showing them how much I love them now it's doing everything I can to be safe for them. And I think that that's one thing that has changed. What other aspects, where were you questioning besides family?

Joseph Stratton 00:30:57

Family, friends or community.

Annalyse Stratton 00:30:59

Okay. So friends. Um, it's, you know, I have a very good friend that I work with. So I've been really blessed to be able to see her even outside of work. You know, since we work with each

other every day. It just feel safe to see her. And I think that that's been really great. Having having people to you know, lean on and you know sometimes during this time. Like I said, you can think selfishly, and like get upset about things like they are missing out on are things that you know wish were different. But, you know, talking about it and letting that out with friends is really great. And I think that you know this pandemic, we have it you know decently well with all the FaceTime and phone calls that we can do zoom. So that's been really great. Just, just in general, I think that um I've grown up a lot during this pandemic and I think that you know that comes at a lot of aspects. I've grown up in terms of really realizing how how much you know is out there. How much more there is to life than just, you know, my small circle of people are. You know, there's and I just think that it's made me grow too in terms of realizing, like how important healthcare workers are and teachers and you know all the essential workers. I think that I think that it's really important to recognize that and be thankful for them because at the end of the day, those are really hard jobs to do, especially right now and and you know just just appreciating more than what is in my own personal life. I think that I've grown a lot in doing that.

Joseph Stratton 00:32:49

So kind of enclosing now. Knowing what you know now. What do you think that individuals or community communities or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

Annalyse Stratton 00:33:03

I think for the future. Like I said earlier, we, we have to support each other and take care of each other. And if that means taking care of each other from home, then so be it. You know, whatever we have to do to make sure that we're all safe and we're all taken care of. You know, doing stuff like reaching out to friends that you haven't talked to in a while, making sure they're okay or staying home if it helps make sure that you know, the person next door to you doesn't, you know, catch the virus and get really sick from it, stuff like that. I think that I think that we need to have a really strong leader who can really see past you know the money aspect of it or the political side of it and see that there are lives in danger and Caring about those lives. At the end of the day, I think that that's the most important thing. And I think that I think America is pretty damaged. To be honest, I think that for so long growing up, and you know, even the first couple years of school for me in college. I always thought that, you know, Americans were very like supportive of each other and everything, but seeing how how people are being so stubborn and not opening their eyes to other people's lives it it really shows that, you know, we need a little bit more compassion. So at the end of the day, I think that compassion and having a strong leader who you know listens to other people and takes advice from, you know, other countries and stuff like that like you know, not being so stubborn. I think that looking outside the box is a really important thing to do.

Joseph Stratton 00:34:56

Well, I think that's about it for questions. Thank you for coming on and doing this and you have a great rest your day and stay safe!

Annalyse Stratton 00:35:06

You too.

