

A day in the life of a global pandemic: an auto - ethnographic report, with insight to how the 'doings' during the lockdown period has re shaped life.

This paper aims to discuss life during the pandemic through the method of auto ethnographic practice and writings. This method affords me self - reflexivity, where one can hope to critically engage with self from a distance of sorts, this concept is thought to help shape one's perspective.

The decision to write an auto ethnographic report during/about the imposed lockdown of the people's, was made in order to produce a paper with 'qualitative content/ data'. Conducting ethnographic research from the comfort of one's home, is an interesting example of the term "Armchair Anthropologists", coined by Anthropologist Evans - Pritchard. Pritchard discusses Anthropological research conducted without visiting a community or place that one is researching, as an example of said 'armchair anthropologists' - Pritchard discusses this method of research as lacking personal interaction. (Evans- Pritchard)

When planning the research question and discussion, I found the ability of face to face contact with proposed informants and communities as problematic to produce qualitative data. Reading ethnographic reports of Anthropological encounters are informative, also has been said by Evans - Pritchard as an essential method when forming research ideas and questions. Paradoxically, while lending notes from said Ethnographic reports from Anthropological studies as sound research and methodology - one cannot capture and experience the 'first - hand' moments that enrich the writings of a researcher on location, affording the report a richer context from the readers. The very 'doings' of a community can be essential in adding another dimension to the descriptions of a place or community, for example; personally i concern myself with Ethnomusicology as a sub- genre of Anthropological studies, soundscapes and music are a predominant factor (personally), to understanding places and peoples. Whilst reading about soundscapes and musical doings and agency can be interesting and informative when attempting to understand a place or peoples, this information cannot afford one a ear to listen to the birds that sing, or the musical agency produced from a performance. Reading about these 'sound encounters' makes the following questions problematic; "how did the music make one feel?", "did the said sounds or musical interactions through making, playing and listening lend a hand in producing musical agency?", "how/did the music or sound invoke a change in moral or emotion from self or community?".

Visually depicted writings cannot afford one the added dimension to writings through 'sensory data', for example; one cannot smell the morning dew, through the writings on a page, as one cannot hear the chirping of birds through the words of another. One can also not expect to feel personal emotion through the emotions of others writings - which leads me to wonder, can reading another's Ethnographic research pose pre conceptions of a situation?

This paper aims to discuss the 'doings' of one during lockdown, problems that have arisen and paradoxically the methods one has used to alleviate said issues. This paper does not concern itself with the reasons of lockdown - being Covid 19 - or the many political issues

that arise during these unique times one finds themselves in, rather the emotional side effects and causes that the pandemic affords one.

When approaching writing an anthropological auto ethnography at home, I pondered many subjects and discarded them as problematic, as this pandemic and imposed lockdown has caused a 're-shaping' of my behaviours or rather my 'doings' to change. For the first time in my life, I have not left the comfort of my home (further than the garden) for 11 weeks and counting. These current times are extraordinary - hence the extraordinary feelings and thoughts that I have experienced, for example; March saw the Nation (along with most peoples across the world) in a government imposed lockdown, which I like to think of as being grounded by the government. I have a seven year old daughter, who was born with a partial AVSD, and various other cardiac complications, and therefore is shielded in a stricter manner than others with a weaker immune system. When we require basic provisions, we cannot join the Tesco queue and must rely on delivery services and unshielded, compassionate people to collect what we need and bring it to us, whilst sticking to the two metre suggested guidelines. In the recorded history of the World, we people have never had such restrictions imposed upon us - not even during the Plague in the Spring/ Summer of 1665, therefore there are no examples to lend example from, on the subject, as this is a unique first time experience of such measures, there are no Anthropological Ethnographic reports of such times - whilst there are writings from the Plague, these (now) very specific guidelines have not afforded us these particular writings from past pandemics, which in turn makes these current anthropological reports fascinating and one day - historical.

The manifestation of my thoughts and worries for my family (and humanity) at this time, caused my stress levels to develop into a state of anxiety. Stuck in the 'concrete jungle' of being physically and mentally bound to this 'concrete jungle', did not afford any adult interaction beyond a technology screen. The harsh reality of these restrictions allowed my anxieties to evolve into a very real, horrifying physicality of my mental state - and so the panic attacks began. Without previous experience of the physicalities of anxiety and a hatred of googling symptoms, led to a state of fear - that once could never begin to fathom or understand - I have now accepted that; I understand, that I will never understand. Initially these attacks left me sweating and petrified of the impending doom that my mind had imagined as a reaction to these 'unknown charters'. I have since discovered that googling symptoms of anxieties (in particular) is called 'Cybercondria' and evolved description of hypochondriac when discussing the internet as a ready source to the majority of peoples now around the globe. The term Cybercondria was coined by a British Newspaper in the early 2000`s. (www.goodtherapy.org/blog)

During these 'early days' of the panic disorder during lockdown (March, 2020) I would experience a tight chest, to the point where I thought my chest would collapse in and that was the end of life for me. I experienced a tightening around my throat, that felt a lot like suffocation, excessive sweating came part and parcel of the condition and when the attacks got the better of me, and I was unable to talk myself out of them - they would escalate considerably, where I would develop pins and needles in my hands and feet, (which my doctor via telephone, describes as a decreased amount of Carbon Dioxide running through my bloodstream, this was caused by hyperventilating.) Shortness of breath and the quickening of heart rate - led me to believe I was having a heart attack. This 'foreign state of

being', caused an unwelcome change within me, I began to become depressed - and overly anxious about everything - as with all doings out of our control, it became habitual and this habit forming negative doings, began to take over ever part of my day - even seeping in to the evenings - causing an erratic sleeping pattern, which effected my motivation the day preceding.

The lockdown imposed upon the Nation, made this situation difficult to overcome, as I could not enjoy the luxuries of leaving my home, to visit the doctor, or to discuss these issues with friends, face to face. I was afforded the ability to chat with the doctor via telephone, but this did not enable the doctor to conduct the basic checks - i so desperately craved; checking my pulse - or listening to my heart for irregularities. Such 'luxuries' many of the world take for granted (including myself) we are afforded these luxuries, where paradoxically some parts of the world people are not afforded such on hand help - I know coin these basic provisions as privilege. Lacking the ability to seek professional guidance face to face, I found myself turning back to Spirituality once more. I began praying for health (mental and physical) for the safety of my family and humanity as a wider picture. These times have seen me 'digging out' forgotten crystals like Amethyst and Amber for guidance and healing. I have sought guidance from the divine, promised to live a better, less self-serving life, if I can be granted with a safe journey for me and my family through the pandemic. Desperation has had me dusting off books I had packed for the charity shop; reading materials to help with spiritual growth and the cleansing of my Chakras. Reading Buddha quotes as life affirmations and manifestation reading materials to aid the re-shaping of my thoughts and mindset from a negative to positive place. Along with 're- shaping' my thoughts, I made progress after accepting medication (Propranolol) for these anxieties from the Doctor. This was a desperate, hard decision for myself, as I have previously prided myself on the 'shunning' of Western medicines' wherever possible. Having discussed the latter - credit must be given where credit is due - the attacks became 'more manageable' - every single day the worries lessened and I regained ,myself.

Medicinally speaking, music was also instrumental (as always) in aiding my recovery. Emotionally speaking, music allowed me the freedom of escapism from the prison of my thoughts and fears - whether that music be listening to some Motown on Youtube to relax, or playing some soothing sounds of Coldplay on the acoustic guitar. The music afforded me to step outside of my 'uncomfortable zone' of thoughts i had become accustomed to - like a third arm i wanted removed. Listening and playing music allows me to live in the present. This technique of living in the now thee most effective avenue when combating these moments of madness, instead of dwelling on the past or things i cannot control - or becoming apprehensive at the thought of the future - i live in the now, i simply 'be'. Physically, music is an outstanding source of soothing and comfort; tapping my hands and feet, dancing around the kitchen when relaxing. I discovered from research from the British Association for Music School that listening to particular tempos and beats can be instrumental to finding a 'common ground' when my heart was experiencing irregular beats. When my blood pressure dropped, i would panic and search for music with an upbeat tempo and paradoxically, when my heart beat would race and my blood pressure high, I would find relaxing calming sounds or guided meditations on Youtube, that afforded me a quick, efficient manner to calm down and regain control. (British Association for Music Therapy, 2020)

During these unknown times, the only certainty is uncertainty, Tim Ingold in 'The perception of the environment' discusses how humans, when separated from human interaction and agency and placed in ecological crisis, "behoves us to reverse the order of property". (Ingold, 2000) This was certainly the case for myself, when faced with separation from (adult) human interaction and agency, within this ecological crisis - I was compelled through no control of my own to reverse the order of my property. The pandemic did not afford me a rule book of behaviours and doings in order to keep myself -me, in a constant state of re-shaping myself through the unknown emotions and actions that made up these past eleven weeks. One day my children and grandchildren will wonder about the doings during this time, whilst at a history lesson or discussions with peers and they will be afforded the writings of current anthropological studies and auto ethnographies, as a raw, honest reading source.

Reference Index

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