

A Research Study by Colorado State University Anthropology Students

HERE AND NOW LIFE IN A PANDEMIC

How challenges vary by livelihood in Fort Collins

Learn about each livelihood study here: issuu.com/csuliberalarts/docs/covid-19_impact_on_livelihoods

The COVID-19 Life in a Pandemic research project and methodology:

In Spring 2021, Colorado State University undergraduate anthropology students enrolled in the Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology class undertook a collective study of the impacts of COVID-19 on Fort Collins residents in different livelihoods. To our knowledge, this study is the first of its kind to examine how one's livelihood may impact their experience of the pandemic.

In preparation for our research, we submitted our research plan and got approved by the Institutional Review Board at CSU. Each student also took Human Subjects training and was certified by the university to conduct this research. The research was organized in three phases. After selecting their livelihood focus for the term, students began with Phase 1: researching the literature about their group. What challenges did teachers, nurses, or restaurant owners deal with before the pandemic? How did those challenges change during the pandemic? How have musicians, grocery workers, food bank employees, and those in other livelihoods, adapted and what was the impact of those changes? Library research from Phase 1 gave students a foundation for understanding what we know about 12 livelihoods. Phase 2 engaged students in conducting interviews with someone from their respective livelihood. Questions for these semi-structured interviews drew from their Phase 1 findings in the literature and allowed students to deepen their knowledge through someone's lived experience. In Phase 3, students used the insights from their interviews and literature research to create survey questions that were then distributed to a wider circle of people in the line of work they were studying. Students collected survey responses from 275 people across the 12 livelihoods in Fort Collins.

Two overarching patterns emerged across our studies of 12 livelihoods:

1: **Mental health.** COVID-19 has been hard on everyone's mental health. In our research, this impact was most notable among **nurses, teachers, student workers, and musicians**, but for different reasons. Among the livelihoods, there is a spectrum related to workload and overload. Nurses and teachers, for example, are required to perform critical work involving demanding and high-stakes human interaction. Less obviously, student workers are also already at the edge of managing their responsibilities--to their studies, their work commitments, and their personal lives. For people whose demands are already at the limit, the pandemic caused a surge of added expectations that left many without the capacity to process the overload.

Performing artists like musicians fall at the other end of the spectrum. They were not asked to do more, but made to give up the stimulation and satisfaction of performing their art. Because many musicians work solo or in small groups and often travel for gigs, many had no outlets and consequently, suffered significant mental health decline for entirely different reasons than those noted above who suffered from overstimulation. It is worth noting that performing artists in local theatre experienced much less isolation than musicians because of the supportive, place-based community they already belonged to. Their efforts to keep theatre alive and stay connected to each other through increased use of social media also tapped into an established pipeline for donations that provided increased financial support during the pandemic.

2: **Empathy and connectedness.** A second pattern that showed up across many livelihoods involved people reporting new forms of empathy and connectedness. In a very real sense, this pattern could be considered a positive note in a time filled with hardship and sorrow. Grocery workers got thrust into roles as "essential workers" and, in the process, felt a greater sense of awareness for and connection to the community they serve. Service providers for low-income families such as staff at the **Food Bank for Larimer County** and those who work with **Housing and Rental Assistance** experienced a ballooning need for their services during the pandemic. Meeting overwhelming needs required summoning both empathy and care to organize and adapt. **Elementary school teachers** reported a greater sense of concern for and closeness to their students and **high school teachers** talked about their conscious work to create more empathetic classrooms. **Musicians** indicated they were moved by the 2020 protests and Black Lives Matter movement, and they brought these ideas into their creative work. And, **retail shop owners** in downtown Fort Collins reported feeling more connected to their customers and grateful for their loyalty.

LIVELIHOODS IMPACTED BY COVID



ICU NURSES

Nurses on the medical frontlines of COVID-19 have heroically met fierce challenges while risking their own mental health.



LONGTERM CARE NURSES

Nurses provide vital care for our most vulnerable; the pandemic has added unthinkable physical and mental stress to the equation of care.



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Few K-6 teachers liked teaching online, but most reported becoming closer to students as they learned more about their struggles.



HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

High school teachers have adapted to intense new demands, encouraged classroom empathy, and endured the mental health impacts of their work.



FOOD BANK STAFF

The Food Bank for Larimer County has adapted in creative ways to meet the needs of more clients than ever while protecting everyone's safety.



HOUSING/RENTAL ASSISTANCE STAFF

Increased funding after COVID-19 and efficient online meetings have allowed housing providers to reach the growing number of people in need.



GROCERY WORKERS

Essential workers are frontline employees at a time when sacrifice for the community they serve is at an all-time high.



STUDENT EMPLOYEES

Student workers have always had to balance academics, work, and personal life, but during the pandemic, greater workloads have taken a toll.



MUSICIANS

Local musicians have persevered through depressing times, continuing to create new music inspired by the nationwide social issues of 2020.



THEATRE PROFESSIONALS

Theatre artists have had to take a break from their dreams to make room for the dangers and difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic.



RETAIL SHOP OWNERS

Despite facing major challenges during COVID-19, local retailers have felt supported by customers and remain positive for the future.



RESTAURANT OWNERS/MANAGERS

Restaurant owners and managers have adapted to serve a world with new protocols amid supply chain disruptions and fresh demands on work hours.



ANDREW JEDLICKA



BERIT DOOLITTLE



BROOKE MCCONNELL



CLAIRE TAAGEN



DANIKA MINTHORN



IAN MORRIS



LU EPSTEIN



NICK GAGE



OLIVIA HEIFETZ



RACHEL HICKEY



RANAE CALL



WALTER TULIS



DR. KATE BROWNE



ANTHROPOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



Scan code to learn more about the research findings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Students in the Methods in Cultural Anthropology class (Spring 2021) and Professor Kate Browne extend our sincere thanks to the following people, organizations, and establishments for their generous help and contributions to this study:

Medical and Mental Health: Annika Kamberelis, PA-C ; Kelly Schmalstich, NP; Lynn Kalert, NP-C; Laura Ornowski-Hildebrand, MS, ANP-C; Angie Scarpello, Columbine Health Systems; Kate Hagdorn, Monica Keele, MPH, and Janelle Patrias, MSW, CSU Health Network. **Retail:** Tom Stoner and Brandon Hocke, Spoons; Amy Satterfield, Wadoo; Jim Hewitt, The Cupboard; Hannah Baltz-Smith, Downtown Development Authority. **Theatre:** Sydney Parks Smith, OpenStage Theatre. **Grocery:** Kyle Foy, Victoria Edwards and Danya Juarez, King Soopers. **Education:** Shannon Lewis and Arielle Kukafka, Poudre School District. **Social Services:** Paul Donnelly, Food Bank for Larimer County; Franz Quinones; David Rout, Homeward Alliance. **Music:** Mike Finders; Caroline Beatrous; Rob Osborne, Avogadro's Number; Steve Price. **Fitness:** Sue MacMiellan; Chad Bryant, Raintree Athletic Club. **Other:** Kate Jeracki; Jane Albritton.

We also thank the brilliant graphic design team at PushIQ, Elena Haverluk, and Beth Etter for their work to help us produce the poster and digital book. We thank our beloved Department of Anthropology and Geography and the College of Liberal Arts for their financial contributions to help support this project.