



Inés Matres

“Ha! Suck on that Corona, I Found Something to Do” **Capturing Adolescent Experiences during Lockdown in Finland**

Abstract

In the spring of 2020 young people were living in an exceptional period of isolation, messiness and emotional turmoil. The pandemic situation in Finland serves as the background of this study, which focuses on participation and the voice of adolescents in times of crisis. My inquiry is based on 75 diaries collected by diverse museums and archives and originally created by 11- to 18-year-olds during remote schooling, and my aim is to ascertain how they were invited in and responded to making the stuff of history. Combining oral history and media ethnographic methods, I provide an analysis of the diaries focusing on the emotional resilience attached to hobbies, the echo that the narrators' information habits generate, and the media ecologies that resulted from the crafting and writing of diaries. My main argument is that although the diaries capture the narrators' reactions to the crisis, the strong presence of their ordinary lives exposes shared generational traits that are worth preserving beyond this strange time. The students were writing in and about the immediate environment in which they lived their lives, which resulted in an uncommon and rich form of oral history that raised new questions about young people's experiences during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19, remote schooling, children and youth, cultural participation, oral history, emotions, hobbies, digital lives

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Introduction

What came to be known world-wide as the COVID-19, or coronavirus pandemic had an effect on people's everyday lives. The drastic changes of routines that children and youth had to make from one day to the next and the length of the pandemic has generated research and public concern about their experiences during remote schooling. Even if the lockdown measures in Finland did not entail strict home confinement as imposed in other countries, schools closed, and pupils had to organise their schoolwork from home¹. This turned what used to be a source of structure and routine into a factor of messiness in life (Ahtiainen, Asikainen, Heikonen, Hienonen, Hotulainen, Lindfors, Lindgren, Lintuvuori, Kinnunen, Koivuhovi, Oinas, Rimpelä and Vainikainen 2021, 44–46). It has been recognised that factors related to family, personal situations, gender or geographical locality made experiences of remote schooling heterogeneous among pupils (Lahtinen and Kauppinen 2021; Helfer and Myllyniemi 2022; Tuuva-Hongisto, Korjonen-Kuusipuro, Armila and Haverinen 2022). Ethnography is an interesting starting point from which to approach this exceptional time as the pandemic destabilised the taken-for-granted of everyday life, which is at the core of this article. It was pointed out in a recent issue of this journal (48.1) that more attention should be given to "daily life findings" in efforts to understand the complex social, place-based and technological relations that intertwine in and around going to school (Hämeenaho and Sainio 2021, 86). Although these relations have always existed, they became problematic when school, family and leisure collided at home on March 16th, 2020.

As Tine Damsholt (2020;2021) pointed out, the pandemic offered a unique opportunity to examine the complex work of emotions, objects and routinised practices in shaping experiences. The idea of seeing the familiar and routinised as a black box in which "neighbouring and unexpected elements cohabit in the setting of a situation" (Lofgren 2014, 81) is of great interest to me, in this article and related to my previous research, as I ponder on questions about agency and mediated practices of pupils in the contexts of everyday schooling (Matres 2018; 2020). This article follows the day-to-day lives of 75 adolescents² through the diaries they produced for diverse classes as assignments during lockdown, which were later collected in diverse mu-

1 Basic education and secondary schools closed from March 16 to May 12 in 2020 (Valtioneuvosto 2020) and on diverse dates depending on the area in the Fall/Winter 2020–21 (Yle 2021).

2 The term adolescence is conventionally used to emphasize the changes that occur in transitioning from childhood to adulthood, I do not mean to emphasize this but use it because it describes the age-group of narrators more accurately than "youth" (ages 10–24). (Csikszentmihalyi n.d.)

seums and archives. Even if the exceptional situation provoked the production and collection of these diaries, the pandemic became the background and not the driving force of their everyday lives. The following statement that inspired the title of this article transmits the effect that reading these diaries provoked in me:

HA! Suck on that corona I found something to do, I found in my closet some old paintings and I am doing them over. Actually, now that I got time to think, I came up with a bunch of things to do, I can bake, paint, find out the real reasons Titanic sank and all about other sunk ships. (23.3.2020 Veva, 9th grade)

Even if some diaries were entitled "quarantine diary", the accumulation of daily entries conveyed much more than experiences of lockdown. The diaries convey also the entanglements (Ingold 2008), or the intertwined and complex relations among the personal and curricular achievements, in and out of school activities, familiar environments and routinised practices, none of which disappeared during the pandemic. The strong presence of their ordinary lives in the diaries and the fact that they were created as schoolwork shed light on how youth was *invited* in and *responded to* documenting this historical moment, which is the underlying question I pose in this article. It is pertinent to pose this question and to recognise their voices at a time when adolescents were perceived as being deprived of cultural and public life. Present-day cultural participation means more than participating in free-time activities. When it comes to children and youth, cultural institutions focus their efforts on providing experiences, but rarely consider the outcomes in terms of what young people want and can contribute (Simon 2010, 211; Meijer- van Mensch and Tietmeyer 2013, 10). Given that diverse cultural institutions were responsible for collecting these diaries, my aim in this article is to consider their contribution, which as Kaitavuori and Miller (2007, 29) observe requires looking at them supporting adolescents' autonomous initiatives and remaining close to their cultures.

After giving an overview of the diaries, methodological and ethical considerations, I analyse the material closely, focusing on the emotional responses that the narrators connected with hobbies, the echo that their information habits generated, and the media ecologies that resulted from the crafting and the writing of the diaries. In my concluding discussion I reflect on how documenting (in) the immediate environments in which they lived their lives allowed the adolescents not only to document their pandemic experiences

but also to share "generational" traits worth preserving and reflecting upon beyond this strange time.

Oral history in contemporary times, a method for exploring quaranteen diaries

Collecting people's reactions to present-day phenomena is a contemporary form of oral history that originates in the tradition of writing "from below". It involves actively seeking life stories of people in the margins of history (Sheridan 1993; Latvala and Laurén 2013; Hovi, Mäki, and Sonck-Rautio 2022). Oral history projects rely on the participation of ordinary people, and many emerge during exceptional times (Cave 2014; Kelly 2020; Sloan 2020). Four of the many initiatives of museums and archives in Finland that documented the COVID-19 pandemic³ involved the collection of 75 diaries⁴. The projects that collected these diaries could be considered part of this tradition, although school assignments are an unusual form of personal testimony. Having interviewed the curators, I learned that their projects did not align with a coordinated strategy to document the pandemic (Bounia 2020), and they did not know initially what they would acquire. It was rather upon the initiative of a few teachers and their students that the diaries were collected. The ethos behind the collection reflects what Jenkins and Carpentier (2013, 282) describe as true participation: adults 'letting go of control' and young people experiencing 'being taken seriously'. Unlike responses to questionnaires or interviews that normally constitute oral history, these diaries do not respond to a pre-existing research intent: they belong to the ordinary lives of adolescents, thereby appropriately approaching this historical moment "from below".

Diaries are artefacts that are often encountered in oral history archives. Some research based on life-writings during lockdown has been published recently (Damsholt 2020; Kurvet-Käosaar and Hollo 2021; Mountfield, Gronow, and Trentmann 2022), and although the focus is not on adolescents, one common theme has emerged from the studies that is also common to research based personal narratives, namely emotions. The diary "is a genre that facilitates self-reflection and analysis of change" (Kur-

3 Finnish museums coordinate contemporary documentation projects through the TAKO network. Information about all corona documentation projects can be found here: .The Finnish Literature Society's Traditional and Contemporary Culture collections launched two questionnaires to collect reactions: "Corona Spring" (March-June 2020) and "All year Corona" (March-October 2021). Information about these can be found here: <https://www.finlit.fi/en/node/1626>.

4 Hämeenlinna City Musuem (15 diaries), Hamina City Museum (27 diaries), Kymenlaakso Museum (30 diaries), Finnish Literature Society (3 diaries).

vet-Käosaar and Hollo 2021, 58): in other words, diaries reveal less about the facts of the crisis and its broader effects, rather emphasising personal experiences and the emotional impact. Focusing on emotions in personal narratives may enhance understanding of historical phenomena from marginalised perspectives (Latvala and Laurén 2013, 255). My aim in the first analytical section is to focus on emotions connected to hobbies that are mentioned recurrently in the diaries as a reminder of what is important to the narrators.

In close reading these diaries I also turned to media ethnography, which could be described as sensitivity towards the links and interdependences among artefacts, practices and social arrangements around the use of media (Lievrouw and Livingstone 2006), and particularly the digital media that mediates daily routines (Pink, Horst, Postill, Hjorth, Lewis and Tacchi 2015). I explore these interdependences in two analytical sections based on adolescents' reactions to news about the pandemic, and their practices of crafting and writing the diaries. The diaries consist of born-digital materials and paper artworks, which make them particularly interesting with regard to the media literacies of present-day youth.

This brings me to the 75 diaries. I focused on diaries because they offer similarities: all were assignments, they started on March 16 and ended on May 14. This allowed me to consider them as one corpus of material produced by adolescents between 11 and 18 years of age⁵. The diaries originated from six classes altogether, donated by three teachers to their regional or city museums, and in the case of the archive they were submitted directly by students. Informed consent to conduct research was given by each pupil, and also by parents when minors were involved. Given their ages and the recency of the materials I anonymised all the quotations, and I do not establish connections between the material and the institution to avoid compromising personal information about their place of residence (Kohonen, Kuula-Luumi, and Spoof 2019).

Hobbies and shared emotional resilience

Soon Easter holiday will start, which means, no need to go to meets on Friday or Monday. Up to now no one has created a medicine or vaccine for corona. I have focused on better things to do than watching news about corona, I bake and I've really baked a lot, so I might as well say it, I'm going to become a confectioner when I grow up

5 Ages were inferred from the grades. Although all the diaries were marked with the class or grade of the pupils, not all gave their ages.

and that's dead certain (I have been dreaming of a pastry chef career for the past 4 years). (9.4.2020, Veva, 9th grader)

Hobbies, when mentioned in diaries, often provoke an emotional or motivational reaction (Strauss and Quinn 1997). My focus in this section is on the reactions triggered by the mention of hobbies. Veva's diary contrasts with the diaries of most of her classmates as she gives prominent space to her many hobbies. This is not the rule: most of the diaries do not focus on hobbies, although the narrators mention regularly doing something for fun, or reveal at some point what they are passionate about. Practicing hobbies triggered expressions of fulfilment, passion, joy, fun, pleasure and even addiction in the diaries, which projected adolescents as the active emotional community they comprise, sharing experiences and expressions of emotion (Rosenwein 2002, 842). Even if the pandemic inspired complex emotions, it was only the oldest narrators who voiced them. When emotions appear in diaries, as Nancy Chodorow (1999, 6) posits, "the psychological meets the cultural and the self meets the world". In other words, through feelings we make sense of the world, and when feelings are voiced others make sense of us. Indeed, the emotional tone connected to hobbies allowed me to know Veva and other narrators more intimately. It revealed how important it is to have hobbies alongside family responsibilities, chores and schoolwork, the reporting of which frequently implied a sense of duty.

Hobbies can be understood in terms of emotional resilience during the months of lockdown. Resilience has been defined as the process by which one adapts to difficult circumstances, which usually originates in the ordinary (Masten 2015; Hytönen and Malinen 2018). For some, such as Veva, hobbies offered a way of coping and a shield against the flood of pandemic news, thoughts and conversations which, as Darmsholt (2021, 255) found, conferred a layer of anxiety in the diaries of many as a "sticky basic mood". Hobbies, for others, intensified or added to the anxiety felt during this period:

I have survived being within these four walls surprisingly well, but I realise that without training regularly I am more tired. Then, at night I am wide awake and cannot sleep. I am used to swimming an hour and a half each day, and now I that I don't, I cannot burn my energy properly. Sure, I train otherwise and walk many kilometres each day, but the amount of exercise has reduced at least to a half because of this virus. I don't remember when I last went swimming and I miss the pool (7.4.2020 Koni, 12th grade).

Koni's emotional reaction is not isolated: narrators who could not engage in their hobbies experienced disappointment, frustration and sadness. Koni's disarrangement of biorhythms that resulted from not training properly serves as a reminder that emotions are just part of a complex chain of bodily reactions triggered when habits are broken. Other athletes and sport spectators shared a sense of frustration over cancelled tournaments or closed facilities. Team training or orchestra rehearsals were replaced by exercises done in one's own room, definitely less enjoyable. In some diaries, hobbies drove adolescents to consume news, hoping that restrictions might be lifted soon. While the pandemic generated an emotional and possibly a resilience divide, the strong emotional response holds.

Spring is coming, slowly. Many are really sad about cancelling all their summer plans. Festivals and other events will not be held (27.4.2020, Lopo, 9th grade).

Emotions are salient when narrators write from a personal and subjective position but are equally reported on in less personal statements. Dorothy Sheridan (1993, 32) pointed out that some narrators willingly take a less personal position of "observer rather than being observed" and this is the case for the majority of diaries. Even in these instances, such as Lopo's statement above, the reader is given the impression that the narrator participates in the collective sorrow. Pauliina Latvala and Kirsi Laurén (2013, 250) observed that "even if experiences and emotions are personal, different people may experience the same general pattern". This general pattern is reflected in the repertoire of activities, which I collected from narrators who could engage in hobbies: Cosplay, watching Anime all day, driving dad's car, *mopo* (slang: moped), dance a choreography, orienteering, baking, milkshakes, Saturday candy-day!, *pleikka* (slang: PlayStation), Netflix, audiobooks, customising clothes, playing an instrument, Fornite, Audacity, planning the first road-trip, go fishing... The reader can easily imagine not one but a plethora of teenagers behind each of them. This echoes Harriet Nielsen's (2003) notion of the historicity of self-constructions, meaning that the way people present themselves is common or shared among age-cohorts. In other words, it is socially constructed, but equally it results from sharing a cultural and historical period. These hobbies and the emotional response to them reveal both the age of these narrators but also the time in which they were living.

To sum up, I have showed here how hobbies became a strong source of emotional resilience for adolescents during the pandemic, even if this was unevenly distributed. However, this did not diminish their power. The narrators who

found refuge in them instead of reporting on school progress or commenting on pandemic-related news (which were clear objectives of some of these diaries), indicate that they exercised the freedom to pursue their own documentary agendas. In so doing, they captured one important piece of their shared teenage experience and time beyond the specific of the pandemic.

Digital continuity in the messiness of new routines

It is surprisingly difficult to recognise the students' own school rhythms even if various diaries accumulate lists of things done day after day. It has been shown that the lack of lesson plans was a major cause of stress among school pupils during lockdown (Lahtinen, Laine, and Pitkänen 2021; Ahtiainen et al. 2021). The diaries confirm that they dedicated different amounts of time to school each day (Ahtiainen et al. 2021, 44–46). Many students evoked the "messiness" through complaints, forgetting 'live' lessons, or mentioning that homework was piling up. The fact that a few students discontinued keeping their diaries made it clear that some of them were not coping with the new situation. Even those who meticulously kept them up to date admitted to having problems following their plans:

The first time I wrote in this diary, I had planned to follow a daily rhythm. Now it has taken a back seat, I no longer take decent breaks and I really don't have time to go outside between school hours (8.5.2020, Susa, 9th grade).

Tine Damsholt (2021; 2020) poignantly described chaotic pandemic routines using Sarah Ahmed's notion of being attuned to or out of synch with public life (in Damsholt 2020, 144). This lack of stability and an incapacity to follow plans aligns with a general pattern of being out of synch with the world. However, it has been recognised that homes constitute "a setting for choreographies that make life run smoothly or an arena of conflicting rhythms" (Ehn & Löfgren as cited in Damsholt 2020, 139). Similarly, school may always have been a place of conflicting rhythms for some of these students. This raises the question of what, if anything, provided them with continuity.

It is undeniable that laptops and learning environments turned into essential facilitators of daily routines, such as returning homework, attending lessons or taking exams. Simultaneously, they became problematic as aspects of life had to be transferred from present to online environments, thereby increasing screentime. But the pandemic has presented opportunities to focus on "how" rather than on "how much" young people engage with their devices (Fetcher-Watson in Thomson et al 2018, 3; Hämeenaho and Sainio 2021).

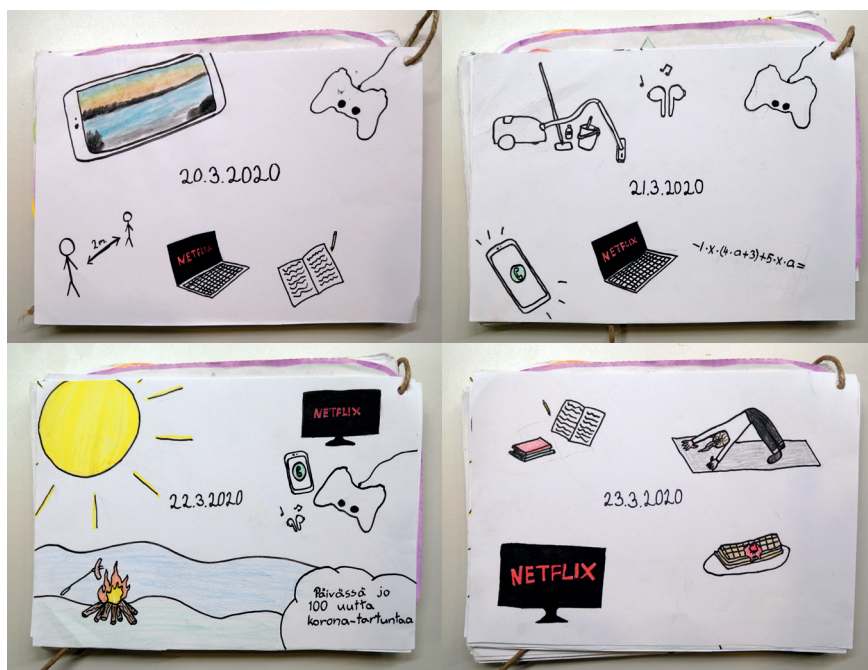


Figure 1 Nina, 7th grade.

The idea of “digital continuity” emerged when I was examining the art diaries which were, ironically, the only non-born-digital material. The presence of devices in many of them drove me to collect signs of their digital lives. Nina’s way to record her daily activities (see Figure 1 above), show the extent to which framed objects and framing devices were entangled in her daily routines. These entanglements show that the “digital cannot be dealt as a separate substrate but as constitutive part of what makes us human” (Horst and Miller 2012, 4).

An aspect in which digital lives flowed in the diaries was through the references to news on which the writers commented or reproduced. A 9th grade history class collected and provided commentary on news read each day. Many diaries made by two art classes of 7th to 9th grades were collages done with newspaper clippings. Both sets of diaries are well-stocked catalogues of references to news coverage and online content that were in the social-media feeds of many during the first months of the pandemic. The diaries contain a network of connections to diverse digital objects that leave a trace (Cocq 2019; Uimonen 2020). It would be possible to collect these objects, but many narrators embedded fragments of online news conspicuously in their narratives and these do not stand out as much as paper clippings. Identifying these links



Figure 2 Clem, 7th grade.

would be equivalent to reconstructing the students’ messy routines. However, this replicates a typical trait of the present-day networked communicative milieu.

A song composed by several pop artists in the spirit of solidarity, was praised among some narrators, whereas the attempt to crush the largest school virtual platform circulated on TikTok was criticised. While some welcomed the idea to see friends face-to-face at the end

of lockdown, one student’s entire diary consisted in a single entry making the stronger his position against the Government’s decision to return to school for only two weeks. Some became trapped in “a liminal space trying to gather as much information as possible” (Yong 2020), and others welcomed the *infodemic* of conspiracies and humour that spread with the virus as a way to “lighten the mood”. While many commented restrictions and news from polarized positions in support or opposition, others created humorous meme-like commentaries, or replicated content in diaries as if they were bookmarking or retweeting it. However, a few reacted to them in a more personal and elaborated tone which I would like to illustrate with Clem’s collage (see Figure 2 above). The manifold reactions to the pandemic situation bear remarkable similarities with the online media discourse. The variety of positions and opinions also reflect the cultural aspect of the “historicity of self-presentations” (Nielsen 2003). By this I mean that the diverse positions narrators occupy were culturally mediated by the informational environments that surrounds them. With this, a specific trait of their time was captured by adolescents that should be considered as a continuation and reflection of their pre-pandemic lives.

Wood, paper, phone... the mediated voice of adolescents

The focus in this section is on the multimedia and multimodal content of the diaries. In terms of materiality, I examine here the complex media ecologies they assemble and how they facilitate and constrain adolescents in documenting experiences. Media ecologies have been defined as the interdependence

and layering of modes of being online and offline in the world (Ito, Baumer, Bittanti, boyd, Cody, Stephenson, Horst, Lange, Mahendran, Martínez, Pascoe, Robinson, Sims and Tripp 2009, 31). It is also interesting to observe how media ecologies can unite or divide curricular and vernacular practices (Kupiainen 2013b; Matres 2020).

Woodwork, Easter decorations, collages and drawings present in the diaries contrast starkly to the videogames, films and other media practices also mentioned in them, but these analogue media also transmit the narrators’ voices. When I was reading the material, I focused on listening to the adolescents’ voices, my intention being to consider them the makers and shapers in documenting this experience. With “voice” I understand what Charmaz and Mitchell describe as *animus* in storytelling (Charmaz and Mitchell 1996, 285), that is, to consider not the content of a story but the way authors make their will and intent visible.

The elementary school pupils embedded photographs in their diaries. Their class teacher⁶ wanted to be kept informed about their overall school progress, and to offer support⁷, and the diaries include his weekly feedback. Many photos depict projects realised outdoors (see Figure 3 above), which indicates that some teachers actively promoted maintaining a balance with increased screentime, and it also reflects that this was a rural area. Apart from things that could be photographed, some students mentioned video works and school projects that did not fit the format or scope of the diary and as result, these were merely referenced, not captured in the material. Lasse’s video, described in his diary entry above (Figure 3), is one example. Many other students mentioned the water mill, but he was the only one to photograph it, even if the video showing that it works was sent through



another channel. It is also worth pointing out here that some narrators only reported on things that they thought were aligned with the

Figure 3 Lasse, elementary school.
Excerpts from diary: 15.4.2020 I built the water wheel and sent you a video [...] – Friday 16.4. I saw the video, was there a bearing in the water wheel? It swirls so fast. J. No, I did not use a bearing, I put a separate tube in the middle.

6 Classroom teachers in Finland work in the lower grades of elementary school (grades 1-6), they oversee one or several groups and teach diverse subjects (Opetusministeriö 2007).

7 Clarified in interview with curator 20.10.2021



Figure 4 Ujo, 9th grade.

assignment. Even if keeping a diary allows for self-reflection, and as previously examined some students reported on their hobbies or adopted a more personal tone, others kept a strictly “curricular” diary. It thus seems that the curricular context of these diaries (rather than their nature as diaries) inspired many to maintain the in-and-out-of-school divide (Kupiainen 2013b).

Another set of diaries were artworks done by two classes and were exhibited outdoors near the school later that year, after which, they were sent to the museum⁸. They also comprise a variety of materials which indicates that they were encouraged to experiment with diverse techniques. However, a few students produced diaries that followed a coherent body of work. This confirms what Latvala (2016, 409) observed, that oral history writers “adopt and combine established narrative tools to achieve their communicative goals”. Among the oldest pupils, Ujo used only postcard-sized cardboard and through a similar technique he gave visual continuity to his diary (see Figure 4 above). Developing his personal style Ujo advanced in his art class. Like his and Lasse’s, the storytelling animus of many was to show curricular progress and achievement. Even if in some instances, developing a personal narrative or artistic style blended with the curricular task and the reason they were collected: to document and reflect about the pandemic.

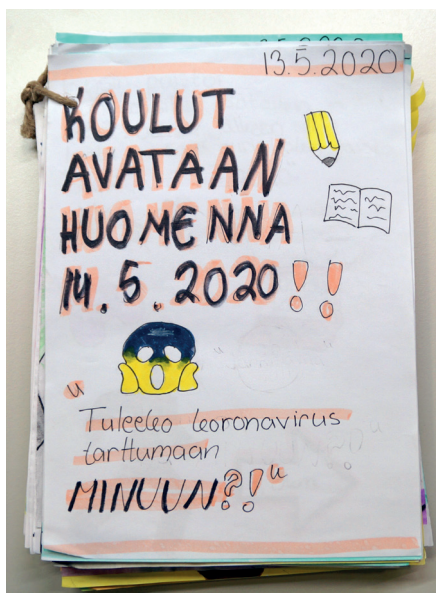
Another aspect that derives from the materiality of the diaries and makes visible the voice of narrators relates to the aforementioned digital entanglements in the lives of narrators. With entanglement I refer here to the intervention of new writing originally defined as the “language of digital texts seen in messaging and online communication” (Merchant 2005). One way digital materiality can be understood, refers to how digital technologies impact the way people communicate (Horst and Miller 2012, 30). This has remained unexplored in oral history but is of great interest for semioticians and digital

8 Clarified in interview with curator 8.12.2021

ethnographers, who often rely on youth to explore this phenomenon. New writing accentuates visual aspects of language, extend the meaning of text and the range of writing practices. So-called iconographic communication (Siever, Siever, and Stöckl 2019), namely emoticons, emojis, hashtags and stickers, have become common as devices through which adolescents nowadays express emotions and reactions (Miller 2015; 2016), and they are present in the diaries. The presence of emojis in homework is a sign that young people’s media ecologies combine the vernacular in curricular contexts. This reflects Reijo Kupiainen’s (2013b, 42) notion of the “third space”, meaning the rare moments when the “out of school media practices of students are met halfway by their teachers”. It is visible in diaries such as Alma’s, whose reports on her anime film carry an emotional tone indicating that it is a hobby, which is met with curiosity by the teacher (and the reader). Although most narrators refrained from using emojis, and kept a curricular tone, those writing in their own informal language⁹ actively and serendipitously kept record of it:

6.5. [...] Oh, and I downloaded Kinemaster yesterday in my tablet and I started making an anime film 😊😌📺 [...]

Saturday 7.5. Wow, what an update... PS. the film sounds interesting, is it a crime film? J. Yep, of course, it's a crime film 😊💎 (Alma, elementary school)



Emojis, stickers and hashtags are also drawn in the paper diaries, similarly as shown in Figure 5. This indicates that contexts of new writing are not exclusively digital. All this reflects what Miller audaciously suggested while observing youth’s polymedia practices: “feelings have migrated from textual to visual communication” (Miller 2015, 11). The presence of visual

Figure 5: Schools open tomorrow 14.5.2020!! ‘Will I catch coronavirus?!’ Kopi, 7th grade

9 Here it is worth pointing out that spoken Finnish (*puhekieli*) does not derive from texting, but the use of iconographs was often accompanied by shortened words and vernacular language.

punctuation and references to media practices reinforce the need to consider the visual as valid a constitutive part of how adolescents communicate as "the digital".

One last aspect I find interesting about the materiality of the born-digital diaries is that the act of writing is tied to the digital device where the diaries were composed. This allows to speculate about the physical contexts and situations in which narrators wrote their diaries. Laptops and word processors are not particularly open to the insertion of emojis in text, therefore their presence points to the use of a mobile device, in which a catalogue of visual punctuations is available at the tap of a finger. The implication here is that some diaries were conducted using the app or environment used to communicate with the teacher. This is emphasized by the presence of replies to the teacher's feedback, as it is shown in Lasse's and Alma's examples earlier. Even if the diaries were written upon reflexion at the end of the day, snapshots of school projects, food, walks, or "data" such as the exact length and average speed of the daily bike ride, made the act of keeping diary a practice entangled in the course of the day, accompanying the many experiences they chose to share.

To conclude, there is a similarity between research-driven oral history narratives and these diaries, in that they provide a way of acknowledging and making visible the literacies and writing practices of these students (Sheridan, Street, and Bloome 2013, 348). What these diaries reveal is that writing is nowadays entangled in a range of achievements, activities, spaces and emotions that are accumulated in phones in the course of the day and are recalled in aid of memory, or are captured and communicated in more spontaneous ways.

Concluding discussion: Adolescents' participatory intensities

The diaries and the way they were collected reveal how, when adolescents were given the chance to contribute, it was productive to refrain from giving them directives or fixing objectives. It is clear that they only needed "an external prompt to write their autobiographies" (Sheridan 1993, 33). My main argument in this article is that documenting (in) the immediate environment in which narrators live their lives results in a life-like portrait of their generation. The diaries offer rich material to be used in future research on youth cultures and experiences during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is not to say that the narrators' experiences were documented (or indeed reported here) in a free or unmediated manner. The accumulation of daily entries revealed instructions and a reason for being other than to document lockdown lives, such as reporting on homework and reflecting

upon news read each day. Moreover, as the point of a diary is to record something every day, students adopted diverse diary styles and habits which flow in diverse points of my analysis. Some conveyed a personal, intimate or informal tone whereas others were more distanced, or remained on the curricular while a few pursued their own documentary agendas. The fact that entire classes were given this task does not necessarily contradict the voluntary nature of participation, but it is necessary to acknowledge the minority who discontinued writing the diaries completely or partially. The variety of styles and the absences enhance accuracy when portraying adolescent experiences and manifest the diverse range of participatory intensities that "distinguish participation from access and interaction in cultural life" (Jenkins and Carpentier 2013, 241). The point here, I believe, is that the intensity was defined by the narrators and the way they engaged with their diaries, and it was neither constrained nor influenced by the teachers or the intention of museums and archives to document a phenomenon. Given the active way in which the adolescents responded to being invited to become involved in the making of the stuff of history, one could describe assignments as a fruitful genre of oral history. Nevertheless, as I made clear in my analysis, the curricular contexts, which were only partially documented, might have prevented some from expressing their vernacular selves.

Focusing on aspects of life that continued despite the pandemic instead of those that became strange and messy might not reflect what was expected, but adolescents' autonomous and active practices frequently defy expectations (Kupiainen 2013a). This is echoed in the statement that gives the article its title and in the themes I selected. Returning to Veva, she metaphorically defeats the pandemic after a week of feeling lonely, imprisoned and bored. After this, the pandemic is rarely mentioned in her diary. Most narrators were not so blunt, but when entries are recorded every day the accumulation of ordinary experiences eclipses what is exceptional and unique in the situation. The narrators challenged my expectations and influenced my analysis such that, although the pandemic is still present, it remains in the background in their everyday experiences.

I have presented these diaries with due consideration of the voice of the adolescents, in other words their will, intent and feelings (Charmaz and Mitchell 1996). This guided my approach to the pandemic, and to remote schooling as historic phenomena "from below". Combining oral history with media ethnography allowed me to recognise and make an inventory of certain aspects of the students' everyday lives that, although affected by the pandemic, evoked shared "generational" traits. Generational here means that their

personalities and experiences are revealed subjectively as well as socially, and that this is also historically and culturally constructed (Nielsen 2003). First, I showed the strong emotional response and resilience connected to hobbies despite the pandemic-imposed inequalities. Second, although the narrators reacted to news about the pandemic from diverse positions and revealing heterogeneous informational habits, on the whole they faithfully reproduced their networked communicational milieu. Third, I examined the way they constructed their diaries and made use of a range of digital and non-digital media both enabling and constraining in the same degree their curricular and vernacular expressions. Finally, the digital lives that flow in diverse moments of my analysis require considering the act of "writing" as a complex documentary practice entangled in a range of emotions, artefacts, achievements, places and material contexts that accumulate in the course of the day or are shared spontaneously.

These diaries were created and collected at a time when life was increasingly being lived online. Hence, it is opportune to capture and reflect upon the impact of having learned to being attuned with one's online life. Adolescence remains a trope in research on digital culture (Ito et al. 2009; Miller 2016) because having lived with digital devices all their lives, adolescents in 2020 express their digital cultures as bluntly as they can describe their emotions. I believe it is pertinent to consider it as their historical contribution. This focus on their hobbies and digital lives may have eclipsed other topics that could be further investigated. The understated emotion related to schoolwork and gender inequalities in expressing emotion bring to mind similar or more interventional research approaches. Additionally, the narrators' diverse reactions to social isolation, and to the effects of this and other crises, could be combined with other material and examined further. The presence of these reactions indicates that they too shape the everyday experiences of adolescents beyond this particular crisis. Given that these materials are public history records, makes me hopeful for further investigation.

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Inés Matres is a doctoral candidate at the Department of ethnology, Faculty of Arts, University of Helsinki, Finland. This is the last article of her doctoral thesis that examines cultural heritage practices, spaces and encounters in school education in the digital age.

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