

California State University, Monterey Bay



Oral History Interviews

Digital Proximities
Covid19 and the transformation of pedagogical practices

An Emotional Day for Me

Interview with
Jacqui Turner
Recorded on April 02, 2020

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Digital Proximities 001 Turner

Jacqui Turner

Recorded on April 2, 2020

1 **00:00** [Music]

2 **00:12 Gutiérrez** Jacqui, thank you so much for taking the time. I know for some reason our
3 agendas got a little bit more flexible as of late. I don't know about yours?

4 **00:23 Turner** Not really. Well today is um, it's been a... It's an emotional day for me,
5 because we just heard from our superintendent, and they're closing our school for the rest of the
6 school year. So, it's kind of like, I know I'm in contact with my kids via the phone, or Zoom
7 meetings, but I didn't have closure with them. My eighth graders ... aren't going to get their
8 eighth-grade graduation ceremony, where it could be a part of, you know... So, you know, I
9 knew this was coming. But once we had the video conferencing with our superintendent, tears
10 came to my eyes. The realization, I'm so attached to my kids.

11 **01:07 Gutiérrez** *What do you mean that is closing? Is there not going to be any instruction*
12 *at all?*

13 **01:16 Turner** No, it's all on distance learning, but there's no more coming back into the
14 classroom. So, when you walk into my classroom, I still have the date on the wall, 3/11/20 on the
15 board. I mean, it's an empty classroom. It's kind of like I don't feel ghosts in there, but it's eerie,
16 because of the eeriness of what's happening in our society right now.

17 **01:43 Gutiérrez** *How big is your school Jacqui?*

18 **01:45 Turner** Well, our school has about 75 kids or less. I don't know the exact count,
19 and then I have, yeah, it's a small school. And then I have now, I have 17 middle schoolers, and

20 then next, -for my middle school main class where I teach Language Arts History and
21 Government- they have their own Science teacher in their own Math teacher, depending on
22 where they are placed. And then I teach Art classes, from second grade all the way through 12th
23 grade. So even that part I'm missing is that joy in them going through the creative process not
24 just the learning process but even watching them grow with their art so it's a lot of different ages
25 I'm missing now.

26 **00:00 Gutiérrez** *It's a major challenge for you and for all the teachers at your school. How*
27 *do you go from teaching in the classroom one week, then next week you're fully online? How do*
28 *you do that?*

29 **00:00 Turner** Well, our school was ahead of the game compared to the public schools.
30 We are a public school, but we're a charter school. ... Our school is classified as a *home school*.
31 Our main school is up in the Fresno area, and they are a hundred percent homeschooling, with
32 tutorial classes, where they come in. Our school has been going on for maybe two decades now,
33 as different schools at different kind of charter schools. But then our, the school were at now,
34 they funded us or I'm not sure what the correct terminology is, about 15, 16 years ago. So, they
35 allowed us to keep our classroom situation with homeschooling, so three days a week I have my
36 seventh /eighth graders, and then two days a week they're at home doing home schooling. Or
37 they come in on Friday for an all-day Study Hall for, in which we do tutoring. So, we've already
38 been given the pacing guides, the curriculum. It's all been given to them and we, we can play
39 with it, and, you know, we have that freedom. But we have already in place what a
40 homeschooling or distant learning thing is. The only thing now is the types of tutorials or
41 tutoring one-on-one. Yeah, is missing in person, now we have Zoom. we're doing Zoom

42 conferencing, Google classrooms, we call our students once a week, for sure, but I mean I've had
43 students call me up several days in a row, to help with something. So, there's still contact.

44 **04:40 Gutiérrez** *So there's in a way the culture of online distance education. It's part of the*
45 *ethos of your system. In a way, that makes it easier. I guess that's one good thing, right?*

46 **04:57 Turner** Yes. I think you know the public schools weren't set up for that and, so I
47 have a few students that I've talked to the parents where's, like one mother, her child is, he's in
48 my class, and her other child goes to another school. And, her son, he came home with work. He
49 knew what he had to do, what was due, what essays were due, what history project... Where the
50 school hadn't set up anything for the other son, and he had no work, and so she was very thrown,
51 like "what to do?" And this has been common with another family who has two sons that are
52 older, and then a kindergartner. And she said the kindergartner didn't come home with work, but
53 now as we're in the third week, they're starting to get work from the schools. So that's what I
54 mean by "we were ahead of the game" Our kids already had their monthly homework
55 assignments, knowing what's due, and then we supplement in the classroom.

56 **05:58 Gutiérrez** *So the house (not sure if you mean house) has that relationship with the*
57 *parents? Do you find that it's becoming a little bit more difficult in that the parents may be*
58 *feeling a burden they didn't had before? And is that it's not an issue that is coming up?*

59 **00:00 Turner** It's very interesting, because it really depends on the parent. I have one parent
60 who's got her two kids, and then she's got her niece and nephew there, and she says: "Well, the
61 dining room set up: we've got chairs where there's a chair in between each kid, so I can sit down
62 and help." So, there're parents that are like, okay, they're taking it on. They can do it. There's
63 parents who... like one was very upset, not now, but in the beginning was one son had no work
64 where the other one had loads of work, and she just didn't feel, "why am I taking it all on." But

65 now she's accepted that. So, I think it was, you've got different extremes, but I think parents were
66 all accepting the situation. We, you know, we're... it's new for all of us.

67 **07:07 Gutiérrez** *Absolutely. And it's going to be cases that are dramatic, because it's*
68 *impacting the abilities of the family to cope with the extra strain. And in other cases, it might be*
69 *just a different scenario. And as you were saying some families might be already well positioned*
70 *to adapt. But not everybody, right? So, it's I can imagine however studies. So, let me ask a*
71 *question about your technologies. As a pedagogist, what are the things are working for you in*
72 *this new scenario? What are the things that you're really sort of exploring and trying to*
73 *scramble?*

74 **07:45 Turner** I'm exploring a lot, well, let's see. I've done my tutorial on Zoom learning,
75 on how to do that. A week or two ago, I didn't know how to do it, you know, I knew I didn't
76 know how to do it. So, I think, you know, been doing it. So, I have Google classrooms already
77 set up, and then we had the Zoom. We have texting and phone calls happening, a little bit.

78 **08:25 Gutiérrez** *What is Google classroom Jacqui?*

79 **08:28 Turner** Google classroom is, we call it a software, and the program where you can
80 set up an account with your class and set up your classes. So, I have several classes now, but I'm
81 just going to use my middle school. For my seventh /eighth graders there's a classroom they get
82 in. I set it up, they get invited with their school ID -because it's through our school- but I guess
83 mm-hm... so, they have that school email address and then that's where I post. Besides, some
84 getting hard copies, I post their homework assignments, so they know they can look at their Math
85 schedule, their Science schedule, in case they don't have it on them, or whatever. Now today,
86 with this past month, I had their homework. I had PowerPoints, I had worksheets for them to
87 access through that, so, I have seven classes, we have a seventh-eighth grade class and the other

88 teachers, the other grades, have to. But I have a seventh-eighth grade class. I set up a seventh-
89 eighth grade chat room for the kids to be able to communicate with one another. I now have a an
90 all-school message board, that they can access. Videos can be posted, linked to, and then I have
91 an art class, where I'm just giving them activities, or they can just post their own work, things,
92 like that just keeping it open, so they could stay connected. And I'm just now sending out a
93 request to have them take pictures of them homeschooling and I'm going to post that. Plus it'll go
94 in our yearbook, and so they can see this is a major thing. It's not just teachers and adults who are
95 not in the teaching field, but you know the kids they're all social.

96 **10:27 Gutiérrez** *Yes, they are, aren't they? So, in terms of access to the Internet, have you,*
97 *or your kids have any issues.*

98 **00:00 Turner** Yes, there is there are some that live in areas where the Internet is very
99 spotty. So, they can't get it on. I know that up in Fresno, there's a lot of people in our school who
100 are in very rural areas, so they're having trouble with that, also what's happening is some of our
101 families have three kids at our school and one computer at home. So that's a challenge for the
102 parents, you know. Some of my kids, access their work through my iPhone.

103 **11:22 Gutiérrez** *I imagine the flow, to keep the flow things moving, which is so critical to*
104 *maintain the standard it's got to be so difficult.*

105 **11:33 Turner** So, it's transition because this is new for us, we're all learning well.

106 **11:37 Gutiérrez** *What is what is the background of most of your students? Are they from*
107 *families that work off of agriculture in California or ranchers or farm laborers who are city*
108 *dwellers? I'm not familiar...*

109 **12:03 Turner** I'm going to say they are middle-class, more than now. I guess some that
110 are farm workers, you know, so, it's a wide range. I have a lot of parents that own businesses. I

111 have, some families who, yeah, at one time the parent was a farm worker but has worked their
112 way to where they have their own you know construction business or whatever and so it's the
113 demographics it's probably, I'm going to say, middle, more than anything else. And there is
114 diversity in race in the school.

115 **12:42 Gutiérrez** *Yeah, so if you have an economic type diverse population - economically*
116 *diverse- is there a program from the school or means from the school to make sure to ensure that*
117 *every single student has access to not just Internet, but even a computer at home. Do you know if*
118 *that's of concern?*

119 **13:08 Turner** Well, yeah, it's been a concern, which the school is in process of making
120 sure people have some access to technology with computers. I know that I think it's Comcast, I'm
121 not sure if any others, that are now offering 60-day free internet for kids. Yeah. So, that's out
122 there. You know, it's things, it's just amazing how people are just reaching out. I have several
123 Facebook groups I belong to, as an educator, and the very first week I was amazed how many
124 teachers were out there posting links and class plans, and how to do distance learning. And I
125 discovered so many websites and now Zoom, as a teacher you can have on more than a forty, if
126 you do the free account, with Zoom, you only get 40 minutes, but as an educator, now waiving
127 that. If you sign up, and so everybody's really... it's bringing people together even though we are
128 now so separated.

129 **14:11 Gutiérrez** *Yes, social distancing, has digital proximities. That's a good way of*
130 *putting it, it is an almost poetic way of putting it. So, you've been using... did I hear that you're*
131 *using Facebook as part of your instructional tool kit?*

132 **14:30 Turner** No, not. Just me for myself, okay, I just find links and things like that
133 people talk. I don't even befriend families that I teach presently. I get a lot of friend requests from

134 parents that I'm teaching a child, and it's like no, I don't do that. I do not befriend students'
 135 families or students. (Don't know what that is referring too)

136 **15:18 Gutiérrez** *All the things that you have to be aware of, when you're teaching. On the*
 137 *one hand you're forced to explore these technologies. On the other hand, you need to make sure*
 138 *that you're compliant with procedures and strategies and ways of doing things at all different*
 139 *levels so I can see the complication.*

140 **15:36 Jacqui** *here's a big question for you, and that I'm probably the core of what I'm interested*
 141 *in, as educators, and as we're confronted with this moment, the main thing is How do we make*
 142 *sure that the students will end the term with an experience, an educational experience, that is*
 143 *commensurable to what they were expecting at the beginning, before the crisis began? So, how*
 144 *do you feel about that? How do you feel about your ability -given the circumstances- to ensure*
 145 *that the students would actually end up having a positive and enriching experience?*

146 **16:19 Turner** Well, I can only speak for our school, and because our program is based
 147 for homeschooling and there is a lot of work, and it's required and we call, you know, weekly.
 148 And I have certain kids I have to call like every two days, and say: "What have you done?" So,
 149 I'm confident our kids at our school won't digress, because they're still required their monthly
 150 essays, their monthly History Project, their big tests, and stuff like that. So, as long as I don't
 151 drop the ball, and hopefully the parents keep up to it, so, for us, I don't think there will be much
 152 digression. Unless it fails on the parent's side, of not following through. And I know, my words
 153 can go in one ear and out the other, and still not get work, so, I have concerns. Like this one
 154 student I haven't had work for two weeks, even though I've had three phone calls with him. I
 155 think there's going to be, in the Fall, when kids return, I think there's going to be a lot of catch
 156 up, that... and the teachers are going to have to check where the kids are at, and what they've

157 done. Because a lot of parents are still working, and I also noticed, it seems like now that I'm
 158 teaching middle school, there's a real change in parents attitude. Where it's like: "Okay, your
 159 middle school, you're responsible for your schoolwork. I trust you're doing it." Whereas
 160 elementary parents were right on top of it, so I had a phone call last week, where I called the kid.
 161 I said what work can be done? And this is one of my brightest students too. He skates, you know,
 162 and gets good grades skating and so I've got his parent on the phone and I made him say: "Okay,
 163 tell your dad. Are you telling him the truth? That, when he asks you if you are doing your
 164 work?" And he had to admit "No, I'm not." And now, it's like a transition. It's coming in, so if
 165 the parents are not doing their part, you know, there's going to be problems, plus talking to one
 166 parent they said that they normally they don't do a lot of Internet at home, but their child, who's
 167 at public school, everything is all online. 20 minutes of Lexia, 20 minutes of this program, and so
 168 I don't know, you know, what that will do? Yeah, it'll get a child away from paper unfortunately
 169 reading...

170 **18:57 Gutiérrez** *Do you know what's going on with the kids with disabilities and your*
 171 *school?*

172 **19:04 Turner** At my school? Yeah um, the RSP teachers already had a Zoom meeting
 173 with my student. She had going over reading the articles for his essay that he has to use textual
 174 evidence from, so, they're meeting their needs. We're all still working, yeah, all right.

175 **19:30 Gutiérrez** *Yeah. That is quite a challenge. you said a few moments ago and I'm*
 176 *hoping this is not wishful thinking, that "when the kids come back in the Fall." So, what if this*
 177 *was our new normal? What are the things that that we can learn about the way the way we're*
 178 *doing things now, that we can apply in the future? If this was to become a situation that that*
 179 *really transformed our scenario in such a dramatic way? I'm really... I don't want to be at all*

180 “1984” but on the other hand I think sometimes we are. This is, this is so dramatic. At moments I
181 think, “well maybe is there something that I can learn from this.”

182 **20:34 Turner** I think to me one of my greatest concerns is the student, the behavioral
183 part, in a child's life. As we mentioned earlier, children are very social, they learn from their
184 peers, they experience problem solving through conflicts, through their peers. and right now,
185 that has changed, and so, I think that is going to be something that, when students come back to
186 school, that it's what it will be like. The power of play. They're missing out on the power of
187 playing, with learning. How like the younger kids power of play is so important to learn how to
188 problem-solve. “So and so took a toy from you” How do you deal with it? Even though two
189 older kids who are very much, you know, there's the follower and the leader, and I think that's
190 going to be... That to me, is more the concern. is the social relationship and what's missing, you
191 know, it's very different with your peers than with your... in your family situation Being with
192 siblings and dealing with those things. That's where I think they will have issues.

193 **23:21 Gutiérrez** *I will remain the optimist that I am, and I'm sure that we will be out of this*
194 *hopefully sooner than later, but we still have ways to go for what I'm reading. In any event,*
195 *Jacqui, I'm... and we're out of time with the time allotted for these short clips.*

196 **22:27 Turner** Well, thank you very much.

197 **22:33** [Music]