

California State University, Monterey Bay



Oral History Interviews

Digital Proximities
Covid19 and the transformation of pedagogical practices

"My cat was on the keyboard." Home and self-discipline

Interview with
Verónica Pérez Valladares
By Natalie Davis
Recorded on May 6, 2020

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Digital Proximities **016 Pérez**

Verónica Pérez Valladares

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1 **00:00**

2 [Music]

3 **00:06 Davis** *Okay. Great. How are you?*

4 **00:10 Pérez** I'm good I have all the Sun right here so I was considering to move but if it is
5 okay then...

6 **00:18 Davis** *Yeah, if it's okay with you, otherwise yeah feel free to move, so it's not staring you
7 right in the eyes.*

8 **01:22 Pérez** I'm hoping that it will move away but if not I have a curtain, so... As you
9 probably know already, the place I live in is called Aalborg, the city. I study Expert in
10 Technology Management and I come from Spain, so I'm not Danish.

11 **00:48 Davis** *So how's that been? Is all your family back in Spain?*

12 **00:51 Pérez** Yeah so, I'm the only one here. coincidentally my sister is also in northern
13 Europe. Right now, she's living in Finland, and I am in Denmark, but the rest of the family's in
14 Spain mm-hmm

15 **01:08 Davis** *Yeah that's hard, because Spain has been hit really hard with Covid, from what I
16 was reading...*

17 **01:13 Pérez** Yeah. Fortunately, it seems like nobody in my family's affected. So, that's just
18 pure luck, because we are many in my family. My mom has eight siblings, yeah. So, it's actually
19 really, really lucky that we are all right. Well I include myself, but I'm here. But, it's just I don't

20 know what adjectives to use actually because, for me, when I think about them, I feel that I am
21 way safer here in Denmark, because it's well it's a way smaller country. So, I guess, in that
22 aspect, it's easier to manage, and in Spain, they have been very long time and don't that look-
23 down and I can't imagine how that must be. Like everything can be crowded way easily, then
24 here, here you have more space and so on, so we actually can go out being so that's a major
25 difference

26 **02:15 Davis** Yeah, being able to actually go outside is huge.

27 **02:24 Pérez** I know, it's really funny to see how differently people react. Yeah, I know that
28 some of my friends ;in the beginning I don't know right now how they are dealing with this, but
29 in the beginning I remember a friend saying yeah I don't know exactly what to do because I have
30 friends that are locking themselves up, and I have friends that are like “nah, this is absolutely not
31 necessary” so, I am like: “okay I might meet once per week” and yeah, it's really

32 **02:55 Davis** ...*in the middle*.

33 **02:58 Pérez** Oh it's difficult, I guess, because we're at least me, I'm very social. So, just being
34 here it's so different. And, for example, in regards to the studies, well it's funny because what I
35 feel is that, on one side I'm not going out, which could mean, “okay, holiday time!” Because I'm
36 not going to school and I'm not going to work. But I actually have way more time because also
37 our professors want to make sure that we're having tasks and learning and so on, so, they give us
38 assignments and we still have a group work to do. And I also still have work, which is very
39 lucky, and I'm very happy, yeah, so it's just like sitting at home having like “am I free? No, I'm
40 actually not free! I have this and that, and that, and that, and that to do.” And it's just like holiday
41 or not? Nope!

42 **04:06 Davis** *It's easy to get in that mindset when you're home know cuz you just kind of get*
43 *complacent and you're like "okay I don't have anything to do," but you're right, you look at your*
44 *calendar and like "no, nope. I have tons of things to do, I need to get moving."*

45 **04:15 Pérez** Totally, right. It's such a funny feeling. Yeah at the same time regarding the
46 university project I don't know it's my second semester in this degree so have the feeling that I'm
47 really not learning as I did with the previous one. Maybe it's also because the first one makes a
48 bigger impact on you, and it's like first time learning how the methodology goes and so on but, I
49 don't know, this time it's like even when we meet on group work, we barely started using video
50 on like two weeks ago, and still not all of the people are using it. So, it's very hard because you
51 don't know when they want to speak or if they are doing another thing, or nothing, yeah. We
52 have had some awkward moments, where I haven't counted the time, but it's just like silence.

53 And sometimes you're like "Okay. What happened? are you there? Did I bleep scream?
54 Someone, please, say something! Yeah. Exactly. Also, because, I mean, you can imagine like
55 doing a group work. You think you have like ping-pong with ideas and a discussion, and, yeah,
56 feedback. And when that happens, it's like, well yeah, sure I will go on with my thoughts, yeah.

57 **05:46 Davis** *I know exactly what you mean I had a group project and actually went better than*
58 *we expected but there was like a 30-minute gap, where we're like, we're just going to work on it,*
59 *not say anything because it's really not very effective, because not everyone was contributing.*
60 *So, he just shared on the Google Doc, and then everyone participated on the Google Doc. And*
61 *we were still on Zoom, but no one was talking. And someone joined late and they were like: "Is*
62 *anyone here? Yeah. We're just working being quiet and they're blank screens like very antisocial.*

63 **06:25 Pérez** Yeah, exactly. And then, I don't know, it's just like a whole new dimension.
64 Actually, I have to admit that the other day, for the first time, I fell asleep when I class, because

65 like it was the second class of the day, and the classes are like three hours-15, something mmm.
66 Just fell asleep, and it was I don't know. I could feel the adrenaline in when I woke up, because
67 it's just like not much time, but then I woke up, and my cat was on the keyboard. So I was like:
68 “Oh my god! This is bad. I do not know if they heard me snoring.

69 **07:02 Davis** *Here's your cat, typing.*

70 **07:06 Pérez** I mean surely that happened today yeah. I had everything open I went out for a
71 while and suddenly she had been texting with somebody and I was like okay that's good, it
72 wasn't a the project...

73 **07:14 Davis** *So, you definitely feel like learning has been different since transitioning?*

74 **07:20 Pérez** Yeah, I guess because it requires a lot of self-discipline, because suddenly it's like
75 okay, you're at home, but remember that you have to study. And you cannot just be, I don't
76 know, around the house doing nothing. You have a schedule to follow, and you have to
77 remember that, after the online classes, you still should work. And before them, you have to
78 prepare for them. And yeah. And then be sure that you don't miss any deadlines, and things like
79 that. And I think it has been going well. It just can be a bit stressing sometimes because it's like:
80 “Okay, how can I tell my colleagues that I actually have to work as well?” Even though, we're on
81 Corona times I still have to work and it's yeah

82 **08:14 Davis** *That's a lot, yeah. So, where are you working?*

83 **08:18 Pérez** Yeah. I'm working in a union and it's called HK yeah, I really like it. Actually, I'm
84 really happy that I'm there, and I'm a student ambassador. So, my tasks are to find a way that my
85 Union can offer themselves better to the students.

86 **08:41 Davis** *That's really cool*

87 **08:42 Pérez** It's really, really, nice. I'm learning a lot about a employees rights and so on so it's
88 very, very nice,

89 **08:49 Davis** *Yeah. That's a huge educational experience while you're working*

90 **08:55 Pérez** Totally. And I also make sure that I am being treated honestly, so, that's nice,
91 yeah.

92 **09:01 Davis** *That's true, yeah. Kind of re-examine your situation and be like: "is this fair?"*

93 **09:09 Davis** Exactly yeah, yeah, and that's, I think, that's really funny, because, now that you
94 mentioned it, I have also been following that people are really complaining and more criticizing
95 that give them giving any constructive feedback or anything. And actually the first days like the
96 first me three four days I remember, here in Denmark -oh my god- people went crazy!

97 I think everywhere in the planet but they were just like writing the supermarket's and yeah it was:
98 "wow!"

99 **09:40 Davis** *Yeah, here too. Everything was just kind of bare on the shelves, and still the toilet*
100 *paper, Clorox wipes, those kinds of things, those aisles are still bare. And the freezer section was*
101 *bare, like the produce is still okay, but they're you kind of have to substitute certain things so it's*
102 *really interesting, what's happening at the stores. And then I had been sick for like four weeks so*
103 *I didn't really go out because the doctor tested me and I didn't have Covid, but he said that I had*
104 *all the symptoms, and so to just act that I did have Covid it because I guess a testing here in the*
105 *United States they're not as accurate as they should be, yeah. And they're getting them from*
106 *certain labs, so I didn't go out for a while. And then, I went back into the stores, and they you*
107 *have to ware face coverings, and then you... there's only a certain amount of people limited in*
108 *the store and so you have to be lined-out outside in six feet increments. And so, when I first went,*

109 *there was like 20 people lined out the door, waiting to get into the store. And then each cart has*
110 *to be wiped down, and... it's really interesting...*

111 **10:57 Pérez** The cars?

112 **10:58 Davis** *Yeah, the carts have to be sanitized and wiped down before you can use them and*
113 *then you're supposed to sanitize your hands before you go in and then they prefer that you wear*
114 *gloves if you're touching anything.*

115 **11:09 Pérez** Yeah that's true here every supermarket has alcohol in the entrance, and then
116 gloves like the ones to take fruit and so on they put them in the entrance, and then you have to...
117 Some people, I've seen, that don't take them, but normally yeah, most people yeah. I've seen a
118 few that don't and I'm like yeah...

119 **11:30 Davis** *What do you think has been the most challenging switching from physical*
120 *learning now to all online learning?*

121 **11:40 Pérez** Mmm. I guess not being able to perceive directly the people around, because there
122 is no one around, and so you cannot interact the same way. And, for example, my learning in my
123 university is very, very, much focused on group discussion, and group tasks. And all this around
124 groups. So, not being present has made it really, really, difficult because often the teachers
125 wanted us to make something and maybe half the group was online, or not even that. It's like
126 often in the *presential* [face to face] classes we would have discussions on the meantime, like as
127 we go in the class. And it's like, yeah, so, now these discussing groups and we talked about it in
128 seven minutes. And it's like if we do that, we have to change a call, and connect again. And so, it
129 doesn't work. So, in the end, we're not doing that, and... yeah. Because of that, I think that is a
130 very challenging in that sense also because, sometimes I can see that this must be pretty hard for
131 the professors like I really, really, imagined that, mm-hm and I try to participate, to be honest in

132 the classes. But sometimes it's really hard, because it's really easy to lose concentration when
133 you're kind of in another sphere, because you are muted and your camera is off, because you're
134 many people in the same call. So, it's really easy to just disconnect and suddenly there is silence
135 and you're like: "Oh. Okay, there was a question there!" And nobody answers and you can see
136 that the professor is like waiting a bit or there are other professors that are just like: "So this."
137 Wait a second and then keep on going, keep on going, keep on going, and then there's no space
138 for an answer whatsoever. It's really funny with the different ways. Also, there are professors,
139 that have like a more concrete way of speaking, and they're faster than others in their arguments.
140 And it's shorter and for me that's easier to follow, because it keeps your brain in connection. But
141 there is also some others that give a long explanation and the explanation has branches, of
142 branches, of branches and those totally lose me. And it can be very interesting but it's just like,
143 "what was it?" like okay,

144 **14:15 Davis** *Yeah. I understand. When you're not in a classroom. Classroom learning is like*
145 *you're always engaged, and you're always present. But when you're in your own surroundings*
146 *gets so much easier to get distracted and if you have animals it's even easier...*

147 **14:34 Pérez** Totally, yeah. Definitely and one of my professors it's only one thankfully. Oh my
148 god, if it was more, I would die! And this professor actually really likes asking by names so yeah
149 so often I'm like: "Okay, now I can eat something, because have been really done without eating
150 anything but we..." like it's impossible in this class, because you really don't want to be called
151 when you're taking a bite, and yeah and it's and for whatever the reason she knows my name, so I
152 like to participate though, so, it's okay,

153 **15:14 Davis** *Yeah. And, are all of your classes like in those three and a half hour blocks? Are*
154 *they oh gosh yeah that's hard.*

155 **15:28 Pérez** Yeah, normally yes, but sometimes, especially now with the video calling and so
156 on, many times they explain something and then they give us exercises, and then it can be
157 shortened. Yeah, but, otherwise it is like a long time and, especially in the last classes of a
158 subject tend to be shorter, but the first ones are always like: blah blah blah, blah blah blah. Well
159 on subject, subject, subject, yeah. Not in a bad way, I appreciate it, but it's more intense the first
160 days, yeah.

161 **16:08 Davis** *That's a long, long time to try to concentrate especially when you're not in class.*

162 **16:18 Pérez** Yeah. The good thing is in Denmark, because I was also studying in Copenhagen
163 before, and they also had this system, yeah. It was really nice, but they tend to have breaks often,
164 so, that's, that's, really nice so you have, like, depending on the time of the class, but you have
165 five minutes or 20, 15, 30, so it's pretty good.

166 **16:40 Davis** *That's time to eat in between. Yeah it's definitely adjustment um let's see. So all of*
167 *your classes transitioned have any of your classes not been able to transition online?*

168 **16:56 Pérez** Mmm. Actually, we were supposed to have some class about *Inventor*. Do you
169 know the program?

170 **17:03 Davis** *I'm not familiar with it?*

171 **17:09 Pérez** No, it's right, no, no problem. It's a to make 3D drawings and I guess I'm not
172 100% sure, but I expected to have classes and be introduced to how it works. And so on, but
173 then, the Corona came, and we never had a class. And the class that was supposed to be
174 dedicated to that was set as a self-study. So, yeah. So, actually people are really lost with that.
175 Myself I'm a bit luckier because my boyfriend has been working with that for years and he
176 actually was taught that, yeah so, I'm totally saved, because I have somebody to run to, like:

177 “why doesn't work?” but that's something that he's being a very big struggle because we are
178 going to be evaluated and, nobody has a clue! Yeah.

179 **18:08 Davis** *That doesn't seem very fair. If they didn't give you any instruction and*
180 *introduction to it.*

181 **18:13 Pérez** Yeah. Like the other day, somebody asked about it. and they were like: “No. It's
182 it's still in the curriculum and you have to learn.” And I mean I'm really interested I really want
183 to learn but I guess we should be appointed a class online or something but we only had a few
184 minutes with a professor that suggested: “Hey, if you are interested, I can show you a few tricks
185 and so on,” and we had that. But this is a program that has so many tools, and things to do with
186 it... So, it would be very nice to have like an in-depth trial or something, It's being a funny
187 process yeah... we also had some struggles we were supposed to have... okay how do you call
188 it? We had an assignment, where we were supposed to prepare a speech. Let's say, and then
189 presented so you would be given feedback on your body language and on how you present and
190 so it was really interesting and I think that's very recommendable to anybody at least I am
191 interested but of course after this, that's, that's like an impossible task to do because part of it is
192 like also how you relate to each other because it was a group presentation and like you cannot do
193 that online so in the end it has been very different and, yeah, it's just sad that it couldn't be
194 another way so those are the most challenging situations, I would say.

195 **20:04 Davis** *How long was your commute and did you normally go by rail or ,,*

196 **20:12 Pérez** So, I started by going by bike, but I am very lazy, and I was getting very sweaty
197 and red when I arrived to campus, so that I stopped doing that, and I started taking the bus and
198 that's a... if you catch the buses right away, it's very fast. It's like, it can even be 15 minutes on a
199 lucky day, I would say, but normally I try to go with at least 30 minutes minimum, because you

200 never know: traffic or you miss the bus, or yeah... So, it's actually not bad, like I was used to in
201 Spain in Madrid. Yeah. I actually would like to do my internship abroad when he comes and I
202 really don't know how the world is going to react after this like it's still going to be that much
203 global exchange or what's going to happen.

204 **21:15 Davis** *Yeah, I was wondering about that too, even with trade, because I know that*
205 *certain there's just a lot of fear around trying re-contracting it and bringing it back into certain*
206 *areas or spreading it, yes it'll be interesting and I know yeah, studying abroad will be interesting*
207 *too because aren't doing an internship. They might have you do it I know I was talking to one of*
208 *my professors and they were transitioning to doing it just virtually or trying to do it just virtually*
209 *I'm like um they are talking about an archeology internship and usually that's pretty hands-on*
210 *that they are trying to do it like virtually and do more cataloging and that kind of stuff and I'm*
211 *like: "I'm up for it, but I'd much rather be doing it in person."*

212 **22:10 Pérez** That is so different yeah. I hope there is somebody somewhere in the planet
213 creating a very interesting VR like: "You can do everything!"

214 **22:19 Davis** *Yeah. People will be escaping, pretty far. Where they can actually immerse into*
215 *world.*

216 **22:34 Pérez** Yeah. Did I tell you everything you needed?

217 **22:36 Davis** *Yes, yeah no, we covered a lot! We did good. Probably Dr. Gutiérrez will*
218 *probably have to edit out some stuff, because he...*

219 **22:45 Pérez** That's going to be really long you see you know ok? yeah

220 **22:48 Davis** *He is going to be like: "Oh an hour. Okay. I asked for 20 minutes, 20 or 30*
221 *minutes." But he said it was good to just keep the conversation flowing too because then, if we*
222 *had extra, then he could edit out some other stuff, and make it, so that it's that all the crucial*

223 *points are covered, and he'll, I'll send this to him, and then he'll send the edited version back to*
224 *me or to you, and then you can go through it. And see if you like it or don't like it, and then*
225 *approve it. And then he'll send it off.*

226 **23:21 Pérez** That's going to be such a long work! Oh wow, okay. I hope you had pop corn,
227 somewhere.

228 **23:31 Davis** *Maybe he can skip over some parts.*

229 **23:33 Pérez** Yeah, I'm sure he will be... at least, he should!

230 **23:39 Davis** *Yeah, not having a lot of communication, I've realized that when I'm on these*
231 *calls that I talk a lot more, and I'm like: "Oh, someone to talk to!"*

232 **23:49 Pérez** Alright, but that's great I mean, Anthropology and, perks of anthropology, yeah...

233 **23:58 Davis** *Thank you so much for talking with me and I will...*

234 **24:01 Pérez** I was really happy for it I'm glad.

235 **24:04 Davis** *Thank you! [Music]*