

Since Cohen and Wills published their hypothesis the model has been tested and supported in several contexts, including with individuals going through cancer treatment (Gremore et al. 2011). The main take away is that if you have active relationships where you feel supported, you are shielded from the impact of stress.

COVID-19 has taken away the daily routines through which we interact with our social support networks, or friends and family. Social networks are active and dynamic. When we encounter stress, very few people sit down and make a list of who can provide what support. We go to people and drink tea or they come to us and we have dinner and wine. We laugh and cry with our friends. It is in the social process that support is perceived before being actualised. Living in a context of increased stress during the isolation of COVID-19 highlights this for me. It raises some important considerations as I think about my mom at the societal level. How does society respond to increased levels and length of isolation from the regular, mundane, social interactions that we are used to engaging with? Can online chats replace a hand being held by a friend during crisis? The physiological impact of stress on my own body is telling. Reflecting on the past month, I see that the only major change is that I cannot physically access my support network. Through this reflection I see the most important impacts of the virus on society as more than the biological reactions. We must consider who is impacted by the loss of each other.

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# Coronavirus: lessons from Xinjiang

Two months into the coronavirus crisis I spoke to my friend Polat for the first time in more than two years. I'd heard that he was in Beijing, which meant that he was much safer than if he had still been in Xinjiang, though he was, of course, not safe. But our

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attempts to reconnect had been cautious, and – using technological and social methods to try to evade surveillance – we managed a short video call. Three things from our tearful conversation have stayed, very clearly, with me.

The first is that in all the time since we last spoke, Polat had been worrying that I would think he had simply cut me off. He hadn't dared try to get in touch – contact with foreigners risks internment in one of Xinjiang's concentration (or 're-education') camps – and didn't know how aware the rest of the world was about the conditions there. Even as I avoided contacting him, for fear of his safety, he was avoiding contacting me on the same basis, and we both feared our reasons would be misunderstood.

Second, that he told me his family was safe. He said that the police had come after I visited his home in the south of Xinjiang some time ago – a neighbour had reported seeing a foreigner – but none of them had been taken away. We had mutual acquaintances who had been taken, of course – no Uyghur is untouched by the internments – but for now, *inshallah*, not them.

The third thing that has stuck with me was that, after all this time, and for all the risks he was taking in speaking to me, Polat made an offer at the end of the call to send a box of masks. 'We can buy them here', he said, 'I heard that you can't get them in England'.

To compare social distancing, quarantine and lockdowns to the situation in Xinjiang would be egregious – they are distinct in both nature and enormity. But, as anthropologists, there are lessons to be learnt from the camps for the COVID-19 crisis. The mechanisms of internationalism are grinding to a halt as borders close, planes are grounded and the blaming of other nations is increasingly employed in domestic politics. We are isolated from one another both individually and systemically. We are all, now, conscious of the risks we pose to one another; of the danger that merely being in the same place represents. But relationships and mutual aid endure, as does the need for intercultural understanding, interpretation and sympathy.

The most pressing question in Xinjiang today is the risk of coronavirus to the interned Uyghurs and other minorities; it is difficult to imagine a more vulnerable population than a malnourished and maltreated population forced into overcrowded dormitories. We know about these circumstances in large part because of the efforts of anthropologists and other academics – *inter alia* ethnomusicologists, historians, Sinologists – who have embraced the anthropological approach of long-term, embedded fieldwork: the details have come from long-term relationships, the context from a deep appreciation of Xinjiang's society and its history. As the coronavirus crisis is used to justify increased state power and surveillance throughout the world, and as precarity and vulnerability make themselves felt in previously secure lives, we approach a pale shadow of the experiences of those living in far west China. In the current global crisis, just as in Xinjiang's local catastrophe, it is imperative that, among the many voices that narrate this time, anthropologists make theirs heard. The pandemic is a new and universal human experience, projected through the lens of myriad local contexts. If not to try to make sense of circumstances like this, what is anthropology for?

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## Taking matters into our own hands: reflections on the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines

The national government of the Philippines has imposed an enhanced community quarantine, locally referred to as ‘lockdown’, in Metropolitan Manila until 30 April 2020. This requires home isolation as well as social distancing. People are allowed to go out only for basic necessities and must observe curfew hours from 8pm to 5am. Most people are now working remotely, and classes are temporarily suspended. Others are exploring online learning modalities. For 27 days now, we have been practising home isolation and disinfecting is a normal domestic routine which I do. I have been getting used to the smell of bleach as I frequently wipe my doorknobs and other surfaces. From time to time, I have to go out to dispose of my trash and do a quick grocery run to convenience stores just below our building. With my face mask on, which is a prerequisite now, I go out of my condominium unit and walk across the hallway. I smell varying disinfectant spray with fruity scents coming from other units. Even our elevator emanates the smell of freshly sprayed alcohol, giving me the assurance that I can be safe from the virus and that we are being taken care of by the property management of our building. For me, this provides not only a sense of safety but also a sense of control during this uncertain time.

Nonetheless, the preoccupation with hygienic measures can become dangerous. In some instances, local news circulates online of health workers being discriminated against in their own neighbourhoods, ranging from neighbours wanting them out of the area to physically harming them. Some patients who have recovered from the disease also find it hard to go back to their homes, as people in their apartment or condominium buildings are trying to evict them. On a larger scale, the president, notorious for his war on drugs, employs an equally forceful way of ‘disinfecting’ the country.