Traechelle Williams

Mr. Pellerin

English 102-VH3

31 October 2021

Apocalypse Any Day Now

I’m looking forward to investigating and learning more about the lives of “doomsday preppers”. I plan to gain some type of insight as to what motivates one to join this lifestyle, and ultimately find out what they believe and why they believe it. The first known phase of the prepper movement took place in the 1950s, during the “Cold War”. During this time, the US was at war with Russia. Many Americans believed a nuclear bomb could be dropped at any moment during the Cold War. The US government encouraged all citizens to prepare and build fallout shelters. On top of this, recessions started to take place. By 1975, author Kurt Saxon began writing a newsletter in which he called “The Survivor”. It is said that Saxon is often credited for coining the term “survivalist.’ I find it interesting that at one point, “preppers” were once known as “survivors”, but over time they began to differentiate, as survivalists became known for their combative style of preparedness. Currently preppers are known to take on a hoarding approach when it comes to preparing for survival items, whereas survivalists are minimalist individuals who are more interested in living off natural resources, but they may gather supplies as needed. I have always been curious of the doomsday prepping lifestyle but often viewed those in practice of it as paranoid individuals. By conducting extensive research, I will be prepared to speak with members of this culture and understand their perception related to the importance of prepping.

Although, I can agree that being prepared for any type of disaster or emergency is always a good idea, I’ve always had these assumptions that preppers go over board with preparing for these possible occurrences. This community is widely perceived as paranoid and obsessed conspiracist. The more research I conduct, the more I gain an open mind to the doomsday preppers ideology. Preppers aren’t so much prepping or preparing for one catastrophic event as much as recognizing that there is a never-ending list of possible catastrophes.

I’m going to challenge my assumptions of this group. I believe that despite the wariness, preppers have valid concerns and reasons for becoming a prepper. I hope to gain a better perception as to what these reasons are. I know that they are all working towards a shared goal, and that goal is to survive. I’ve judged this community on hoarding and stock piling things for what I’ve always believed as ‘imaginary scenarios’ that they’ve forced themselves to believe will happen. During my research so far, it is becoming clear that not all preppers focus on an apocalyptic disaster taking place. Many preppers just expect the worst and hope for the best in the situation.

In an attempt to have full access to this community I have joined a few prepping groups on Facebook. I also have a number of other avenues of research I plan to pursue such as watching Youtube videos, being involved in online prepping forums on multiple sites which is the most popular gathering place for ethos groups, and reading articles suggested by members of the group. I plan to not only observe but to conduct interviews of a few of its members and group admins. I do anticipate encountering some difficulties when it comes to interviewing preppers. I’m learning that most preppers wish to remain anonymous and even use fake names in fear of being sought out for their supplies in a worst-case scenario.

Per my academic research requirements, I plan to find at least five sources related to this subculture. At least two of those sources will be online academic sources that touch base on the psychological, sociological, and anthropological variables associated with the prepping lifestyle. This will give insight and help to examine preparatory beliefs and behaviors in the context of doomsday prepping in relation to demographic and other variables listed. There is evidence to suggest that things like anxiety, and compulsive-like tendencies may be associated with prepping. Therefore, researching the psychological, sociological, and anthropological variables associated with preparatory beliefs will help me gain a better understanding of this subculture. I also intend to use the television series “Doomsday Preppers”, found on nationalgeographic.com as my online source. This will help me to view actual interviews of preppers and view them in a typical day of their everyday life. Finally, during my field research I should be able to get answers to any questions I have personally regarding the lifestyle of prepping.

In this day and age, many groups can be found and organized online. In person meetings have become rare due mainly to Covid-19 concerns and because it’s safer this way. While organizing online groups have offered easy and convenient access to finding like-minded people, this can result in generalized thinking. Sadly, with this way of operating, entire groups’ ideas may frequently become discarded. Many will trust what the group’s admins or organizers say, before believing or trusting the thoughts and ideas of the group’s members, specifically if the two disagree on a specific way something should be done. Though, through extensive research and conducting numerous interviews, I would like to add some distinction to the discussion about who they are and how they see themselves in within society.