

Ethical dimensions of Quarantine and Isolation from Clinical and Social Perspectives

CENTER FOR PRACTICAL BIOETHICS ETHICS WEBINAR SERIES

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SOCIAL (IN)JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY IN A
GLOBAL PANDEMIC:
COVID19'S DIFFERENTIAL IMPACTS

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QUESTIONS

- Is the coronavirus pandemic an “equalizer”?
- Who is being hit hardest, and why?
- Could this crisis be a collective learning opportunity that helps us see the ways in which our fates are intertwined?

Is the coronavirus pandemic an “equalizer”?

- Celebrities Tom Hanks and Idris Elba
- Prince Charles
- Prime Minister Boris Johnson
- Several US congressional representatives, all white men

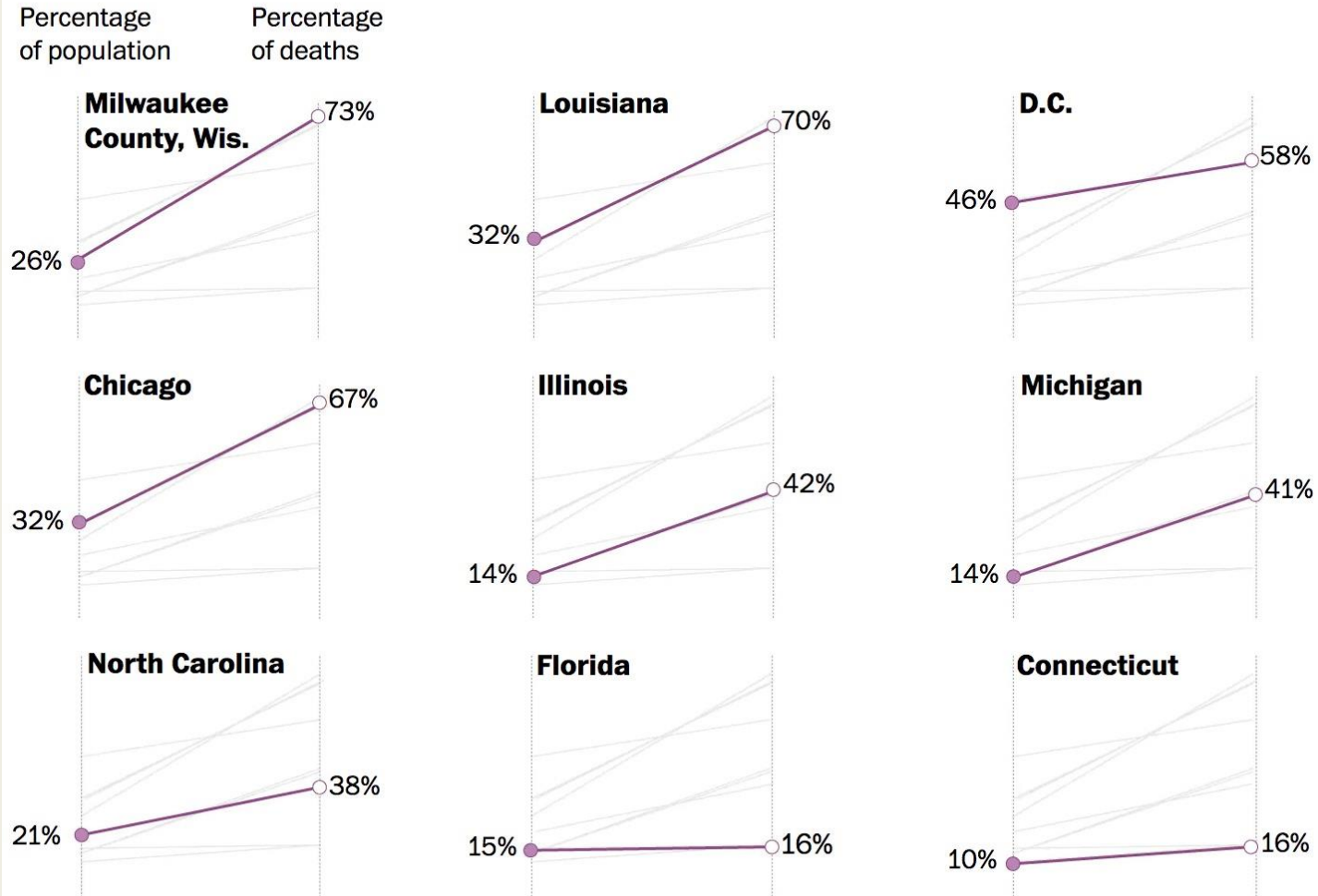
People who make the headlines are not the whole story

- “This is a white collar quarantine”
- There is a “pandemic caste system”
- “not everyone is equal in times of emergency”
- “Covid-19 is going to devastate black America”
- “[I]t always seems that the poorest people pay the highest price. Why is that?”

Who is being hit hardest?

African Americans by percentage of population and share of coronavirus deaths

Only a few jurisdictions publicly report coronavirus cases and deaths by race.



Source: Johns Hopkins University, state health departments and American Community Survey

Who is being hit hardest, and why?

“If you don’t ask, you don’t know,
and if you don’t know, you can’t act.”

Nancy Krieger. (1992) The Making of Public Health Data: Paradigms, Politics, and Policy. *Journal of Public Health Policy* 13(4):412-427.

Covid19 Health Toll

- Few states collecting and reporting Covid-19 infections and deaths by race and ethnicity
- No states collecting and reporting Covid-19 infections and deaths by socioeconomic status
- Leaders from Congress, healthcare, public health, and civil rights groups urge federal government to collect and report data on race

Chen JT, Krieger N. Revealing the unequal burden of COVID-19 by income, race/ethnicity, and household crowding: US county vs ZIP code analyses. Working Paper Series. Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies.

Covid19 Health Toll

■ Most likely to be infected, at risk of risk?

- *Those least able to protect themselves against exposure (e.g., essential workers, homeless, crowded living conditions)*
- *Those with underlying health conditions (e.g., heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, chronic lung disease)*
- *Less advantaged are least able to avoid exposure and more likely to have pre-existing diseases*

■ Most likely to die?

- *See above*
- *Rationing criteria for scarce resources (e.g., ventilators, ICU beds) also biased against people of color and poor people because guided by a utilitarian standard to save the most lives and/or life years, which favors more advantaged groups*

Covid19 Economic Toll

■ 36 plus million lost jobs

- *Racial and ethnic minorities*
- *Women hit hard, who are overrepresented in hospitality, food service, retail, healthcare*
- *Nearly 40% of household making less than \$40,000/yr lost jobs*

■ Millions of US workers have taken pay cuts or been furloughed without pay

■ Comparisons to the Depression

This crisis has brought structural inequities
in America into sharp relief

What is a just response?

From EA Benfer and LF Wiley, “Health Justice Strategies to Combat COVID-19: Protecting Vulnerable Communities During a Pandemic.” Health Affairs Blog, March 19, 2020

- “legal and policy responses must address the social determinants that threaten to exacerbate the health, financial, and social impacts of a public health emergency on low income communities, communities of color, and other socially subordinated groups.”
- “interventions mandating healthy behaviors—such as social distancing—must be accompanied by immediate legal, social, and financial protections and supports to facilitate those behaviors.”
- “legal and policy responses must address root problems in addition to immediate needs”

Could this crisis be a collective learning opportunity
that catalyzes transformative change?

Could this crisis forge a sense of solidarity among all
Americans?

What is solidarity?

“Shared practices reflecting a collective commitment to carry 'costs' (financial, social, emotion, or otherwise) to assist others”

Discussion: Q&A

News Sources

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- Schmidt H. The way we ration is biased: Not every patient has a fair chance. *New York times*, April 15, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/15/opinion/covid-ventilator-rationing-blacks.html>