

Killing Small Businesses – A Covid Case Study

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There is not enough research existing in the field of government overreach within the United States. The focus of this exploratory case study is on applied management as well as theory development within academia, that supports small businesses against governmental abuse. This case study initially focuses on the C&C Café, which was shut down by government bureaucrats, and then explores government over-reach due to COVID-19 that occurred throughout major American cities from a small-business perspective during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. We conclude that small business owners must unite to fight against authoritarian governmental overreach to maintain our health, civil liberties, and economic viability.

Keywords: COVID-19, Coronavirus, Center for Disease Control, incompetence, overreach, collusion

INTRODUCTION

This article describes the early COVID-19 pandemic misinformation and propaganda, along with the defiant response of a small business owner in Colorado. This case study initially focuses on the C&C Café, which was shut down by government bureaucrats, and then explores government over-reach due to COVID-19 that occurred throughout major American cities from a small-business perspective during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the study recommends that small business owners join together to fight against government overreach.

COVID-19 OVERVIEW

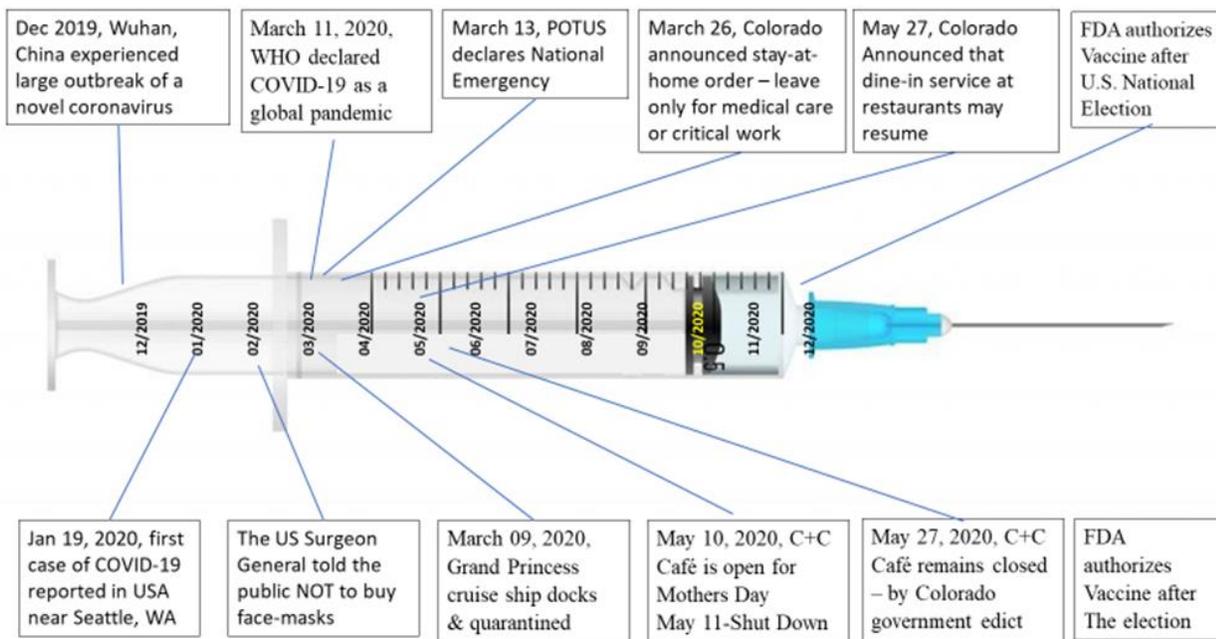
Riou and Althaus (2020) reported on the initial outbreaks of SARS-CoV-2 in Wuhan China. The respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, got its own official name in mid-February: COVID-19, or CO for corona, VI for a virus, and D for disease, and -19 referred to 2019, the year of the first outbreak in China. A high percentage of those affected suffer mild cold- or flu-like symptoms (or at times no symptoms), but this disease causes severe illness in particularly overweight and elderly patients as well as those with pre-existing medical conditions. Riou (2020) determined that the early pattern of human-to-human transmission of 2019-nCoV was reminiscent of the SARS-CoV emergence in 2002; therefore, international collaboration and coordination was considered crucial in order to contain the spread. The World Health Organization (WHO) did not declare the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic until March 11, 2020 (Cucinotta, 2020).

On January 31, 2020, the President of the United States (POTUS) implemented a nationwide travel ban from China; and just four weeks later on February 29, 2020, the POTUS announced the first COVID-19

death in the United States. By this time, there were 85,000 cases in China and 2,800 deaths worldwide (but mostly in China); and COVID-19, was present in 57 countries and on every continent except Antarctica. Per the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), only 14 coronavirus cases were recorded by U.S. public health agencies between January 21 and February 23, 2020, and each of these patients had traveled to China. The first COVID-19 patient who did not travel to China was confirmed in California on February 26, 2022. The POTUS said, “There’s no reason to panic at all” and Dr. Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) at the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) stated, “The country as a whole ... still remains at low risk” (Anderson, 2020). During this same week, the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, encouraged citizens to visit and eat in Chinatown, claiming there was no reason for concern over COVID-19 (NBC, 2020).

A resident of Sonoma County, CA fell ill and tested positive for COVID-19 on March 2, 2020, after returning from a cruise in February; then on March 4, 2020, California public health officials reported that an elderly resident with preexisting health conditions died from COVID-19 after returning from the same cruise. Shortly thereafter, medical officials tied new COVID-19 cases to the Grand Princess cruise ship, which had sailed between California, Mexico, and Hawaii (Hines, et al., 2020). Once notified, the ship terminated a port call in Mexico on March 5th and sailed to San Francisco due to the potential for an outbreak on board. On March 9th the Grand Princess docked at the Port of Oakland under quarantine, which consisted of 2,422 passengers being held at land facilities, while the 1,111 crew members remained on the ship (Albergotti, et al., 2020).

**FIGURE 1
COVID-19 TIMELINE**



Dr. Deborah Birx, the coordinator of the White House task force on the coronavirus, and Dr. Fauci, NIAID/NIH were the two biggest proponents of the “15 days to flatten the curve” strategy. However, 15 days became 30 days, and one month became two. Birx later admitted to confusion over the science (Feuer, et.al., 2021). In addition, despite media calls to “follow the science” we find that the government at the federal, state, and local levels did not have a clue as to “what” the science really stated, which will be discussed further in the following paragraphs.

C&C BREAKFAST & KOREAN KITCHEN'S CASE STUDY

In mid-March 2020, former President Trump announced his “15 days to slow the spread” campaign, which urged Americans to stay home to combat the coronavirus pandemic. The owners of C&C Breakfast and Korean Kitchen, Jesse and April Arellano, complied with the president’s request and closed their café. Unfortunately for every small business owner, the original 15 days turned into months, and the benchmarks for lifting restrictions were rewritten or dropped without valid explanation from both state and federal bureaucrats.

Many small businesses were closed by edicts, or executive orders, not by legal mandates that originated in State legislatures. To be clear, the POTUS did not mandate closures; he correctly identified that this was not a decision that should be mandated at the Federal level. Every small business is unique, and the Governors of the various states reacted differently. The Governors of New York, California, and Michigan took more extreme measures than Florida, and North or South Dakota based on 14 relevant metrics, ranging from the requirement to wear a face mask in public to restrictions on large gatherings (Ellison, 2021). Colorado was also one of the states with the most COVID-19 restrictions in both 2020 and 2021. So, the initial 15 days to slow the spread turned into weeks and then months. The hypocrisy of politicians throughout the restrictive states was their proclivity to pick and choose which companies were allowed to be open and which companies were to be closed. For instance, Walmart, Home Depot, Amazon, and McDonald’s (drive-thru) were kept open as “vital” retailers. In contrast, small grocery stores, small garden shops, barber shops, beauticians, and restaurants like C&C Café were kept closed by government bureaucrats, without supporting statutes from each State’s Legislative Branch.

The Governor of Colorado had issued a COVID-19 public health order that limited restaurants to only serving customers via takeout and delivery service. After several months of closure, C&C Breakfast and Korean Kitchen Café was financially stressed despite receiving a COVID-related grant (Jojola, 2020) – so Jesse and April Arellano reopened the Café to in-person dining on Mother’s Day, May 10th 2020, and they remained open on Monday. At the Governor’s request, the Tri-County Health Department ordered the restaurant’s closure and state health officials suspended its license *indefinitely* on May 11, 2020, citing unsafe practices such as optional (versus mandated) mask-wearing and distancing. (Bradbury, 2020). When interviewed Jesse Arellano said,

“I heard (Governor) Polis ripped us a new one, I don’t know. I didn’t hear it. If the governor and these bureaucrats and these officials want to sit there and threaten us. If we have disobedience you’re gonna say, ‘Well, we’re gonna lock down more.’ Now, it’s not about health anymore. Now, they’re telling you, ‘We got the power. You will comply or we’re gonna punish you.’ I know they’re trying to punish us. They’re gonna try to make us an example, which is fine. We’re willing to accept that.” (Chavez, et.al., 2020).

Colorado Governor said that people who disagree with the public health order should use their First Amendment right to speak out against them, but not violate laws (Miller, 2020). Attorney General Phil Weiser considered this to be a brazen, lawless activity; although it is a misdemeanor, it could result in up to a year in jail for their defiance. In contrast, the Douglas County district attorney, George Brauchler said he does not consider business owners like this to be criminals, but good men and women who are engaging in lawful businesses, and merely struggling with their livelihoods. Similarly, Commander Brown of the Castle Rock Police Department said they would need to consult with their legal team before issuing any summons against the business owners (Johnson, 2020).

The Tri-County Health Department subsequently permitted restaurants to open for limited dine-in service on May 27, 2020 (Johnson, 2020). Officially, C&C could not reopen because the restaurant had its business license suspended due to an ‘imminent health hazard’ which appears to their patrons as political retribution for defying the Governor’s edict on Mother’s Day (Prater, et al., 2020). The Café was eventually allowed to reopen on June 14, but only stayed in business until July 26, 2020, stating that they would not renew their lease in Castle Rock, Colorado (Kessing, et.al., 2020). Six months later, the Arellano family

closed their restaurant in Colorado Springs, Colorado citing staffing restrictions and a decline in sales. They stated, “Not only are sales hurting because of all the restrictions, but staffing too. Unemployment is giving \$600/week on top of regular unemployment, which incentivizes some people to not work, so we are short on staff.” The real question that the C&C owners raised is whether the statist Governor has the authority under the Colorado Constitution to order privately owned businesses to close. The C&C owners and their customers saw Gov. Jared Polis and his administration’s response to COVID-19 as authoritarianism at its worst.

DISCUSSION

For this case study, the term “left” will be used to denote social systems and ideologies of force (e.g., Socialism, Communism, Fascism, and Nazism), whereas the term “right” is used to denote social systems and ideologies of freedom e.g., capitalism and classical liberalism (Biddle, 2012). People on the left tend to want greater government involvement in their lives, whereas people on the right tend to want less government intrusion in their families, their businesses, and their livelihoods. Gov. Jared Polis, like the Governors of New York, California, and Michigan took more extreme measures than less restrictive states like North and South Dakota. Yet the COVID-19 deaths in places like New York and New Jersey were significantly worse than in many less-restrictive locales. Obviously, the owners of C&C Breakfast and Korean Kitchen, Jesse and April Arellano, lean right in believing that fewer restrictions are better.

- Most small business owners believe in concepts of self-interest, competition, as well as supply & demand, and the tendency of free markets to regulate themselves via self-interest, competition, and supply & demand despite the interference of government, e.g. no one forced people to eat at C&C on Mother’s Day, and the customers came voluntarily despite the alleged risks (Baker, 2023).
- Many career politicians and government bureaucrats believe in public ownership of property and centralized economic planning, e.g. socialism.

Jesse and April Arellano, are correct in that neither the U.S. Constitution nor the Colorado Constitution have enumerated functions that permit the government closure of businesses. Unfortunately, despite enumerated functions that do not include healthcare, both the Federal and State governments had implemented both Medicare and Medicaid as extensions of the Social Security Act, so they are de facto involved in healthcare despite the missing constitutional enumeration. At the very end of the list of enumerated functions is one more power: the ability to make all laws “necessary and proper” to carry out the enumerated powers. This is known as the Elastic Clause, which allows Congress to stretch its enumerated powers a bit to fit its needs. Hence, the “emergency powers” granted to a U.S. President, or a State Governor, typically fall in this “elastic” arena. There are also statutes within every state, such as:

- The Colorado general assembly, by joint resolution, may terminate a state of disaster emergency at any time. Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-33.5-704(4).
- Colorado requires the Executive Committee of the Legislative Council and the Joint Budget Committee to meet with the Governor at specified dates following the declaration of a disaster emergency by the Governor. Colo. Rev. Stat. § 2-3-1801.

There are numerous articles in the press that discuss how the POTUS and/or COVID-19 shut down the economy, which is incorrect. The damage to the overall economy was caused by Governors and Mayors who shut down small businesses like C&C Café while allowing giant corporations to make windfall profits. The unemployment rate had been the best in 50 years, remaining steady at or below 4%, and after State Governors began exercising their ‘emergency powers’ the unemployment rate spiked to 14.7% in April 2020 as shown in Figure 2. Since the Colorado General Assembly did not intervene in the economic shutdown instituted by the governor, the Arellano family was been ethically correct about government overreach, but will most likely lose their court battle.

When mandates are created without going through Congress, when ‘executive orders’ are executed as if they are laws, or when an administration allows major corporations to remain open for business while closing or limiting small businesses, then this diminishes all individual property rights. In addition, when

the normal regulatory process is politicized, the rule of law is eroded: all of this political meddling in the economy increases uncertainty. Individuals, families, and businesses not only face uncertainty with respect to COVID-19 policy decisions made by unconstrained governmental bureaucrats, but they face uncertainty as to how those decisions will even be made.

Numerous economic studies and surveys indicate that uncertainty itself can also hinder economic growth. In addition, despite the possible health benefits, strict social distancing policies can and have led to a prolonged economic recession (Shin, et al., 2021). Another consequence of the economic shutdowns in Colorado, and across the United States was the impact on minorities. Brookings Institute reported that the impact was greater for women, non-white workers, lower-wage earners, and those with less education (Bauer, et.al. 2020). This was confirmed by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics in April 2020, which reported that whites had 14% unemployment, Blacks had 16.6%, Hispanics at 18.8%, and Asians were 14.4% unemployed.

FIGURE 2
UNEMPLOYMENT RATES



Reference: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). URL: <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/UNRATE>.

What About the Disease Itself?

The perceptions of collectivists on the left were extremely concerned that COVID-19 was going to kill everyone, and they were comfortable with greater restrictions. The perceptions of individualists on the right were that they would assume their own risks and risk assessments. So, this was a battle of world views with the big-government elitists like Gov. Jared Polis and his army of bureaucrats versus libertarian Jesse and April Arellano, and every small business owner in Colorado. The fight between Polis and Arellano was a micro-example of the national argument on government control versus overreach as explained in the following paragraphs:

Masks

Dr. Fauci had initially told the general public that they did not need facemasks – he then reversed his announcement and encouraged American citizens to wear face masks. Fauci later said that he was concerned that there wouldn't be enough protective equipment for healthcare workers; nonetheless, this decreased the public confidence in Fauci's proclamations that later included social distancing. In contrast, individualists and civil libertarians believed that wearing masks was merely a placebo for the masses, which was later confirmed by research. Dr. Mercola (2020) summarized the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) findings as follows:

“We know that wearing a mask outside health care facilities offers little if any, protection from infection. Public health authorities define significant exposure to COVID-19 as face-to-face contact within 6 feet with a patient with symptomatic COVID-19 that is sustained for at least a few minutes (and some say more than 10 minutes or even 30 minutes)... The chance of catching COVID-19 from a passing interaction in a public space is therefore minimal” (Mercola, 2020).

Dr. Alexander (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of 167 medical articles that focused on face mask usage and his research concluded that “It is not unreasonable to conclude that surgical and cloth masks, used as they currently are being used (without other forms of PPE protection), have no impact on controlling the transmission of COVID-19 virus. Current evidence implies that face masks can be actually harmful. The body of evidence indicates that face masks are largely ineffective” (Alexander, 2021). Despite this evidence, some colleges are reimplementing mask mandates in the Fall of 2023 (King, 2023) – they are not “following the science.”

So, in the battle between Polis and Arellano, “the science” concludes that Arellano was right. The cloth face mask and the size of the virus could be analogous to a chain link fence trying to stop a swarm of bees.

Morbidity – Small Business and School Closures

Mainstream Media (MSM) was fear-mongering COVID-19 for several months largely due to a report from Dr. Neil Ferguson of Imperial College who had a worst-case simulation of 2.2 million deaths in the USA – it simply assumed that 81% of the population would get infected–268 million people–and that 0.9% of them would die. This faulty modeling drove many of the big government proponents to “do something” even though the model was wrong (Reynolds, 2020).

Then, on August 30, 2020, the POTUS tweeted, “This week the CDC quietly updated the COVID number to admit that only 6% of all the 153,504 deaths recorded actually died from COVID. That’s 9,210 deaths,” but this tweet requires context. A Center for Disease Control (CDC) report analyzed causes of death. In that analysis, Table 3 showed the types of health conditions and contributing causes mentioned in conjunction with deaths involving COVID-19. For 6% of the deaths, COVID-19 was the only cause mentioned. However, for deaths with conditions or causes in addition to COVID-19, on average, there were 2.6 additional conditions or causes per death. However, this statement does not mean that only 6% of reported COVID-19 deaths “actually died” from COVID-19. It means that in most cases people who died also had other health complications, like heart disease, diabetes, obesity, or contributing causes such as old age, which therefore exacerbated the effects of COVID-19 to cause these deaths. Having an underlying health condition when a person dies from COVID-19 is very similar to what occurs with deaths that are exacerbated by seasonal flu.

To place the aforementioned comments in context, the author buried five family members in 2020: the first had heart disease and COVID-19, the second had a stroke and COVID-19, the third had metastatic breast cancer and COVID-19; the fourth had high blood pressure and COVID-19, and the last family member was obese and had a brain tumor, but allegedly died from COVID-19. For these beloved family members, COVID-19 was merely a contributing cause of death. So, CDC reports have been misleading because all of these family members would have died fairly soon – with or without COVID-19.

**FIGURE 3
PROVISIONAL DEATH COUNTS FOR COVID-19 AFTER 1 YEAR**

Age group	All Deaths involving COVID-19 (U07.1)	Deaths from All Causes	Deaths from Pneumonia with or without COVID-19, excluding Influenza deaths	Deaths involving COVID-19 and Pneumonia, excluding Influenza	All Deaths involving Influenza, with or without COVID-19 or Pneumonia	Deaths involving Pneumonia, Influenza, or COVID-19	Population
All ages	421,378	3,509,397	374,722	199,396	8,808	604,353	328,239,523
Under 1 year	44	19,044	205	7	21	263	3,783,052
1–4 years	23	3,470	122	3	59	201	15,793,631
5–14 years	67	5,623	157	13	75	286	40,994,163
15–24 years	601	36,171	759	224	81	1,212	42,687,510
25–34 years	2,677	74,513	2,819	1,206	233	4,506	45,940,321
35–44 years	7,057	106,497	6,519	3,242	354	10,654	41,659,144
45–54 years	19,454	195,929	17,478	9,671	764	27,913	40,874,902
55–64 years	49,131	453,824	47,337	25,289	1,622	72,563	42,448,537
65–74 years	89,896	698,926	84,679	46,749	1,883	129,427	31,483,433
75–84 years	117,104	856,102	105,607	57,895	1,911	166,469	15,969,872
85 years +	135,324	1,059,298	109,040	55,097	1,805	190,859	6,604,958

https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/covid_weekly/index.htm#AgeAndSex As of 21-02-04

At the time of the POTUS tweet, college-aged people were among the lowest category of deaths by age as outlined by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC data in August 2020 reflected that all COVID-19 deaths from 15 to 24 years old were 300 out of a possible 170,566 – less than two-tenths of one percent. As shown in Figure 3, about one year after the first COVID-19 case in the United States, school-aged deaths from COVID-19 were still extremely small. Students in grade school, high school, and college account for 668 deaths out of 421,378 deaths that involved COVID-19 (less than 1%). When we compare the 668 COVID-19 deaths to the population of American students from age 5 to 24 years, then the per capita deaths from COVID-19 were still very small ($668/83681673 = 0.00080\%$). The author interviewed 150 college students who thought that millions of students died in the USA from COVID-19, which was not true. If we “follow the science” then schools would have remained open: civil libertarians were correct – send the kids back to school!

Based on his meta-analysis, Dr. Alexander (2021) wrote, “we saw very early on that the lockdowns were the single greatest mistake in public health history. We knew the history and knew they would not work. We also knew very early of COVID’s risk stratification. Sadly, our children will bear the catastrophic consequences and not just educationally, of the deeply flawed school closure policy for decades to come (particularly our minority children who were least able to afford this)” (Alexander, 2021, p.1). The initial closures and restrictions were intended to ‘flatten the curve’ so that there were no massive spikes in patients needing hospital care. However, the number of fatalities in Colorado and the nation did not support these authoritarian measures.

Governor Polis said, “I love my mom far too much to put her at risk by visiting a busy restaurant operating illegally, just to take a selfie with omelets and a mimosa” (Chappell, 2020). Like many other politicians, Polis *claims* to follow the science, and then he does the opposite. Harris, et al., (2021) reported that myocarditis is an important but under-recognized cause of sudden death in young people; then Mansanguan, et.al. (2022) found a negative cardio-vascular impact on 30% of teens studied after taking a second Pfizer dose, including tachycardia, palpitation, and myopericarditis. U.K. cardiologist Dr. Aseem Malhotra supported the vax; then his father suffered cardiac arrest and died in July 2021. Thereafter,

Malhotra (2022) determined that there was no evidence to justify “COVID-19 vaccine mandates, passports, or any of the other coercive measures adopted by various governments worldwide.” C&C Owners Jesse and April Arellano stated, “I don’t deny the virus exists, but I don’t believe it’s a pandemic. We have been lied to, scared, and hurt in the name of safety” (CBS, 2020). Arellano’s concerns were echoed by concerned patrons and parents throughout social media. Polis was wrong in shutting down schools and small businesses due to his own unfounded concerns for safety as well as an authoritarian power grab; and intuitively, Arellano was right once again.

Within Colorado, we witnessed a version of David and Goliath, with Arellano starring as David and Governor Polis starring as Goliath, however, this conflict in world views on the national stage (right versus left), in the news business (Fox News versus CNN/MSNBC), and also among academics. For instance, the United States is a federalist system wherein some responsibilities belong to the federal government via enumerated functions, and all others are reserved for the various states and people as per the 9th and 10th Amendments. Huberfeld, et.al., (2020) contend that federalism will have a negative role in shaping the long-term health and economic impacts of COVID-19, including current responses and future planning. They correctly state that under our current system, States are largely responsible for coordinating and financing pandemic response efforts because of the federalist structure of the American public health system. Their solution? More centralization by the Federal Government, and unlimited Medicaid funding: absurd! Although this journal article is well-researched, it missed one key ingredient: an assessment by the program’s trustees found that Medicare’s unfunded liability portion is \$74 trillion, five times more than Social Security’s unfunded liability. The trustee’s annual report said the program won’t have enough funds to pay full benefits by 2024. A summary said, “Projected long-run program costs for both Medicare and Social Security are not sustainable under currently scheduled financing and will require legislative corrections if disruptive consequences for beneficiaries and taxpayers are to be avoided” (Heyes, 2011). The most recent report says that the Reserves in Medicare’s Hospital Insurance (HI) Trust Fund will be depleted in 2028 (Social Security Board of Trustees, 2022). The incompetence of the Federal Bureaucracy to handle the current Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid programs serves as a disincentive to centralize any additional programs.

Cote (2022) identified the significance of adaptive leadership in addressing the complex challenges faced by organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Adaptive leadership, involving behaviors such as identifying adaptive challenges, regulating distress, and empowering followers to find solutions, proves to be an effective approach in navigating uncertainty, ambiguity, and unpredictable situations. This leadership style helps organizations adapt to changing environments and find innovative solutions to overcome difficulties, ultimately enhancing their resilience and long-term success (Heifetz, et.al., 2004; Cote, 2022). In the USA, adaptive leadership was missing at almost all levels of the Federal, State, and local governments, with just a few exceptions.

Tang and Patterson (2023) found that the crisis response to the COVID-19 pandemic in different countries can be influenced by their political systems and ideologies. Their study suggested that the responsiveness of a government under either a conservative or a socialist ideology might be affected by the level of democracy and decentralization in the country; Sweden stood out with its laissez-faire approach (Vogel,2020). In contrast to both more centralized control, and more government, Sweden did not implement stringent COVID-19 responses. Hence, Sweden is a useful case study to examine the interplay of COVID-19 factors because it did not impose mandatory lockdowns and because there were essentially no regional differences in the pandemic policies or strategies during the first wave of COVID-19. Florida & Mellander (2022) researched the role of diffusion factors as well as place-based characteristics in the spread of COVID-19 during the first wave of the pandemic in Sweden, from February to early August 2020. They found that proximity to places with higher rates of infection, older ages of the infected, and the overcrowding of multigenerational households had an impact on infection as well as morbidity, but their research concluded that “In a country that did not impose a lockdown or where there was little variation in regional policies to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic, we find that it is not so much place-based characteristics that mattered to the spread of COVID-19 but rather location, randomness, and bad luck” (Florida, et.al. 2022).

South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem took a similar approach to Sweden. In contrast to authoritarianism in Colorado, Governor Noem issued Executive Order 2020-04, which declared South Dakota to be in a state of emergency, but vested decisions in the citizens of her state (Noem, 2020). She specified that vaccines were up to every individual “if they choose” and vaccine passports would never be required by state officials. Civil libertarians believe that Noem should have been awarded the President’s Medal of Freedom rather than actors, athletes, and corporate billionaires.

CONCLUSION

When President Trump left office, there were just under 420,000 fatalities related to COVID-19, but that number more than doubled during President Biden’s administration despite unconstitutional government-mandated vaccinations and greater restrictions on our civil liberties. Substantial disinformation or misinformation has existed in the press from government officials on the efficacy and toxicity of potential COVID-19 drugs – instead of mandates to get the jab, American citizens and their healthcare providers should have been advised to pay attention to adverse effects to maximize the treatment benefit while minimizing toxicity (Jing, 2022). The COVID-19 response became “Biden’s Hurricane Katrina,” comparable to the criticism and challenges faced by President Bush during Hurricane Katrina. In addition, the once common mantra of “My body, my choice” was discarded by the President and many Governors.

Despite the onslaught of COVID-19, there is no excuse for a continuous disregard of legislative authority and the constitutionally required separation of powers at either the State or Federal levels. South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem understood her authority and she trusted that the right decision would be made by the citizens of her state; in contrast, Colorado Governor Polis did not. C&C Breakfast and Korean Kitchen Café would not have been closed by government mandates, and the owners would not have been charged with crimes if located in South Dakota. They were persecuted by the Colorado political machine and have since been on the verge of bankruptcy, closing both of their restaurant locations. What was their crime? They wanted to work to support their family.

In some instances, governors across the nation attempted to garner legislative authority, failed, and then acted unilaterally in defiance of their own state legislatures. In other instances, some governors never even sought to find consensus and instead ignored state legislatures and their authority from the outset. One such instance was Governor Cuomo’s mandate that required nursing homes to accept COVID-19-positive patients which resulted in a very large number of deaths; followed by his administration’s attempt to hide data about the deaths of elderly nursing home residents (Cohrs, 2021). By chance, Colorado citizens avoided that irresponsible and deadly decision. This is no way to govern. American small business owners must unify to fight against the actions of political leaders that exceed their constitutional authority and often politicians simply lack common sense. Teaching about enumerated powers in the constitution as well as adaptive leadership with a focus on empowering followers will pay dividends in the next emergency.

The United States is now at an inflection point due to the intersection of Antifa/BLM riots, defunding of the police that had spiked violent crime, the shutdowns of the economy by overzealous politicians in response to COVID-19, as well as Modern Monetary Theory (MMT) overspending that has caused the highest inflation in over 40 years (DeSilver, 2022; Baker, 2022; Baker, 2023a/b). U.S. politicians at the local, state, and federal levels have exercised greater control of the economy and personal lives, such as mandated shutdowns, masks, isolation, etc., which has resulted in a significantly negative change in the American economy, as well as individual freedoms. This unconstitutional overreach by politicians can be considered a turning point after which a dramatic change with significantly negative results, is expected to result in the foreseeable future. Placing the U.S. government on a starvation diet is the first step to reversing this decline, which could potentially be modeled after the massive federal spending cuts made by Truman in 1946-47 (Taylor, et al., 2010).

EPILOGUE

A free nation requires freedom of speech and freedom of the press; however, these freedoms have been under attack. Facebook and other online platforms were colluding with the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Biden Administration to manipulate the COVID-19 story and censor debate (Soave, 2023; Tracy, 2023). So, there was a lot of misinformation at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Jenkin (2021) argued that the way the media covered the Wuhan lab theory illustrates a problem with bias in the news business. Specifically, if Trump was for something, the mainstream media was automatically against it. Therefore, this epilogue is provided as clarification on some oft-misunderstood topics as well as government and media misinformation or propaganda.

In the final days of President Donald Trump's administration, they put out a statement that said the U.S. intelligence community had evidence that several researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) laboratory were sick with COVID-like symptoms in autumn 2019. This implied that the Chinese government had hidden crucial information about the outbreak for months—and that the WIV lab, despite “presenting itself as a civilian institution,” was conducting secret research projects with the Chinese military. As early as 2018, U.S. diplomats were worried that the research, which involved genetically modifying viruses to study their potential for infecting humans, could lead to a viral outbreak (Rogin, 2021).

Bloom, et al. (2021) called for an investigation into the origins of COVID-19. Eighteen prominent scientists called for the investigation of the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic to help prevent future pandemics. They stressed the need for interdisciplinary research, data sharing, and collaboration between scientists, policymakers, and the public to gain a better understanding of the virus's origins and to develop strategies for preventing future pandemics. In addition, Nakamura and Warrick (2021) reported on the ongoing investigation into the origins of COVID-19, citing intelligence reports that suggest researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology fell ill with COVID-19-like symptoms in November 2019.

President Biden ordered a 90-day review of intelligence data on the origins of COVID-19, and intelligence agencies have been asked to report their findings. The controversy surrounding the lab leak theory notes that the investigation is complex, allegedly with many possible explanations for the virus's emergence. Two years later we are still awaiting the unclassified report (Collins, et al., 2021). Nakamura, et al., (2021), stressed the need for continued investigation and transparency to understand the origins of COVID-19 as well. In addition, the U.S. Energy Department concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic most likely arose from a laboratory leak, according to a classified intelligence report recently provided to the White House and key members of Congress (Gordon, et al., 2023).

An American Conservative article examines the lab leak theory that COVID-19 originated from a Wuhan lab and notes how the theory was initially dismissed as disinformation. The article argues that labeling the theory as disinformation was unhelpful and that the issue has become politicized, making it difficult to have a constructive discussion about the origins of the virus. The article stresses the importance of investigating the lab leak theory without political bias and calls for transparency and cooperation between China and the international community to understand the origins of COVID-19 (Carpenter, 2023).

Cuffe (2022) identified that some people die *with* Covid rather than *from* Covid, but it took the New York Times another 18 months to catch on. After 3 years of fear-mongering, the New York Times claimed that the pandemic is truly over because the total number of people dying each day is not abnormal (Leonhardt, 2023). It also pointed out that during the worst of the pandemic, all-cause mortality was around 30% higher than normal, but this figure seemed less alarming when considering the admission that COVID-19 deaths were initially overcounted by approximately 30%. Many of the initial estimates were wrong (Weinberger, et al., 2020). These admissions contradicted years of insistence from the newspaper, other prominent US news outlets, fact-checkers, and even chief medical adviser Anthony Fauci, who dismissed any questions about the official death toll as mere conspiracy theories or right-wing disinformation (NYS, 2023).

Finally, myocarditis is an inflammation of the middle layer of the wall of the heart muscle, called the myocardium. Myocarditis occurred in 26.7 out of 100,000 cases after the second vaccine dose, while the condition occurred in 59 out of 100,000 cases in teenage boys after coming down with COVID-19,

according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Barmada, et al. (2023) didn't find increased levels of antibodies or autoantibodies in patients with myocarditis. However, it is not clear why myocarditis attacks are concentrated in young men after COVID-19 injections (Chen, 2023). And if the government mandates injections resulting in myocarditis, we ask shouldn't the government be responsible for subsequent illness or death?

Future Research

Based upon this research, we find that the Federal and State governments were less concerned about "following the science" than they were about exercising authoritarian control over the American population. In addition, the research landscape surrounding the multifaceted challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic is marked by an intricate web of information silos, which has, in turn, contributed to a lack of interdisciplinary collaboration among researchers from differing disciplines. As discussions span topics ranging from constitutional governance to media influence and public health, the separation of information within these distinct academic realms has led to fragmented understanding. A silo approach hinders a holistic comprehension of the pandemic's complexities, resulting in missed opportunities to derive comprehensive insights. As a start, future research may include:

- *Research Question 1:* How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact the balance of constitutional authority between state governors and legislatures in the United States, and what are the lessons learned for effective crisis governance?
- *Research Question 2:* To what extent did media dynamics and the dissemination of COVID-19 information contribute to public perception, misinformation, and the erosion of trust in the United States, and how can media's role in future crises be optimized for accurate and transparent communication?
- *Research Question 3:* What are the multifaceted implications of the interplay between government interventions, economic policies, and individual freedoms during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how can adaptive leadership principles be applied to strike a balance between crisis management and safeguarding constitutional values?

Bridging information silos through collaborative research endeavors could foster a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between crisis management, media dynamics, governance, and societal resilience, ultimately leading to more informed decision-making and a more holistic response to future crises.

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