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Covid-19 Project Experience

Personally, the virus first created a sense of panic. The first sign of something being off was when I showed up to my second class of the day on Thursday, March 12th. Classes had just been cancelled and there was a sense of panic in the room. This wasn't a normal experience and the feeling was it was going to get weirder. I didn't say much in that class as I attempted to process what had just occurred and what to do next. There wasn't much help teachers could offer students as they were just as in the dark as the student body and it was a foreign experience for them as well.

After Thursday March 12th, my last day of in-class work, I was unsettled. There seemed to be a lot of uncertainty in the fast-moving cycle. The next day I was driving back to Washington and got a few text messages about the national guard shutting down the State. This never happened, but during that drive I had a huge sense of uncertainty and even had irrational thoughts on not being let back into Washington. Trump declared a national emergency on my way home, and I was able to listen to it live on the radio. When I got back home, one of my brothers had been watching over my parent's house, so I spent the next couple of days kind of gathering my thoughts on the pandemic and doing my best to minimize contact with people. I had to go to Safeway that Saturday evening, the 14th, in order to get groceries for myself. I was expecting the grocery store to be absolutely nuts, but when I arrived it only took about 20 minutes to get a bag of groceries and the store was operating at a pretty normal capacity. This experience gave me a sense of relief.

A few days after I had to take my mom's grocery list to Costco. I had hopes this would be a similar experience to Safeway, but when I got there the line to get in stretched outside. Costco was absolutely nuts, and you could sense people's panic. Everyone seemed to be in a rush and etiquette was thrown out the window. The store was packed and it took me a few hours to get a pretty simple grocery list compiled. I was originally planning on looking for some extra items, but as soon as I got everything on the grocery list, I got out of there.

The first week, the virus caused me and my friends to mainly communicate by playing Xbox. It's been a strangely awesome experience and every night I've had a ton of friends online looking to socialize. Usually my nights are wasted watching a variety of sports and with the cancellation of all sports I've been having to try new

hobbies, probably a healthy thing in the long run, but under pretty dire circumstances.

A new hobby I've taken up is cooking. My mom is a fantastic cook, so I've tried my best to capitalize on my time at home to learn how to cook some meals. So far, I'm responsible for dinner three to four times a week and I've been loving it. When I'd be living away from home, I'd eat out for 90% of my meals. Cooking seemed like such a challenging, time commitment. Now with seemingly all of the time in the world, it's somewhat the highlight of my day. I would really only cook a meat like chicken and broccoli, but after trying out different recipes the last few weeks I can make an assortment of pretty quality meals that don't even take an hour.

My personal experience was less exciting and telling than my families experience during the adjustments the country had to make to accommodate the Corona Virus. My family had been traveling in Asia the weeks prior to Trump declaring a national emergency based on the Virus. This was an interesting moment for me as every day, the news, shutdowns and lockdowns ramped up. My immediate fear was of them getting quarantined in Taiwan and not being able to travel back to the United States. They were supposed to be travelling until mid-April and the day Trump declared a national emergency, they immediately re-planned and opted to get on a flight back to Seattle as soon as possible.

During their travels they noticed people being very weary of being around them. Their temperatures were checked at restaurants, they had to fill out questionnaires on their health during their hotel stays. In Thailand and Taiwan, the fear was of travelers bringing in the Corona Virus to their homes, a very fair fear. The two countries have a relatively low number of official cases of the Corona Virus, but the fear was still substantial just like it has been in the United States the past two weeks.

Seattle where I'm from, was somewhat viewed as the epicenter of the Corona Virus in the United States after the Virus got into a nursing home and the first 30 deaths in the United States were recorded out of King County (Seattle). Once they flew in last Thursday, my dad was planning on going into work the next day to see the impact the previous week had on his work. He was requested to stay home and not come into work due to travelling in Asia. Despite Seattle having more official cases of the virus than the Asian countries he was visiting, the people in his office

viewed him as a threat to spread the disease but viewed themselves as safe from the Virus because they had not been travelling.

This brings up an interesting theme that's reverberated around the country and the world. The theme of people instinctively looking at other parts of the world to blame or be afraid of. Instead of accepting the reality of the Virus not being contained and being in their own community and backyard, his office viewed it as still travelling from Asia to the Seattle community.

I knew people who chose to ignore the threat and go out to the bars in Seattle when they were on the verge of closing. Both cases of people going out to the bars and my parents travelling were negligent decisions, but in the case of one set being negligent by leaving home while the other set chose to be negligent while staying "home", the consensus was to fear the people that left. In reality, the virus is prevalent in Asia and Seattle, despite this reality people choose to fear one set more than the other.

Thankfully at the conclusion of my parent's being home for two weeks, neither one has experienced any symptoms of corona virus and morale is high. Living with them again is a frustrating experience as my dad has been forced to work from home and my mom hasn't spent much time during the day with family since my brothers and I left for college, but at the same time all of us are trying to be positive as we make adjustments and overall it's been a pretty simple adjustment. One that I'm grateful for.

My dad has been a great educator for me on the effects this pandemic can potentially have on the economy, while my mom has been extremely attentive to health care dilemmas around the country. My dad talks to me about on a nightly basis about the scope of the economy in terms of companies with zero revenue right now, how many people they employ and how much debt they are in, a terrible combination for everyone involved with these companies. The talks can be scary, but also venture to how connected the entire world economy is at this point and is a good reminder on how much everyone is relying on the world figuring out a cure or ways to effectively treat people.

These talks are extremely valuable to me. My one job offer for post-graduation was for a private equity company that invests in retail properties such as shopping centers and malls. Their first fund concluded in the Fall, but with the closure of retailers around the country, they won't be seeing much of a return on that fund until social distancing rules are relaxed, hopefully due to a cure or new

treatments. The longer this goes on the more vulnerable I personally am to them having to downsize and freezing new hires. I don't necessarily feel bad for myself or anything because people's health is the most important thing, and I'm sure I could find a different job. But it does cause me to constantly think about the United States economy and more you read about it, the scarier the fallout becomes.