UCLA

My Personal Experience with Covid-19

Parand Jebraeili

History 129A

TA Emily Bolender

May 18 2020

My name is Parand Jebraeili and I am twenty years old. I am a third year political science student at UCLA following a pre-law track. I am the daughter of two immigrant parents and a first generation American college student. I find that being a student is one of the most important aspects of my life, and, as a transfer, I began my first school year at UCLA this year, eager to learn under brilliant professors, make new friends, network with successful professionals, and ultimately branch out as much as possible while figuring out who I am as an individual. However, this enthusiasm was cut short as Covid-19 began to spread and ultimately changed my entire life as I have known it to be for the last several months. In this essay I will lay out the details of how this pandemic has directly affected my life, as well as those around me, while reflecting on my thoughts regarding how I believe covid-19 will influence the future of the world in general, and establishing the historical context which this current situation connects to.

The current Covid-19 pandemic has directly impacted my day-to-day life in many ways. Despite the fact that there are many steep hills on the UCLA campus, walking to class and sitting in large lecture halls has been one of my favorite parts of attending the school. I find learning during in-person classes to be very engaging and the best method for my learning. This was taken away from me when Covid-19 first began to spread, and the UC system decided that it would be best for the health of all students to cancel in-person instruction. I have spent the last several months living on the UCLA campus in a dorm with two other roommates. This has been something that has benefitted my college experience, making it easier to make it to class on time and allowing me to stay on top of my school work as I am surrounded by like-minded peers at all times. However, as there are over 1,000 students living just in my building, this would be the ideal grounds for a virus to spread. Once in-person classes were cancelled and instruction was transitioned to remote learning, my family and I came to the conclusion that it would be best for

my health to cancel my housing contract and move home for the remainder of the school year. This, of course, was very devastating to me as I knew that I had to leave my new life, roommates, and friends behind to move back home to the San Fernando Valley. I slowly had to transition from a daily routine that consisted of waking up, making it in time to the dining halls, going to lecture, then going to my best friends' apartments, to a daily routine that now consists of waking up, attending zoom lectures, and staying in bed all day. I have seldom left the house over the last several weeks. While this may sound relaxing to many people, I have never felt more unmotivated and lacking drive to succeed in school. The change in learning methods has seriously impacted my ability to stay focused on academics; I find myself completely zoned out while attending my virtual zoom lectures and procrastinating most of my assignments until the absolute last minute. While I was living at UCLA, it was easy to self-motivate while being surrounded by other students at all times, but now, I am struggling to maintain my 4.0 GPA. Regardless, I find comfort in knowing that I am not the only person who feels this way as many of my peers, classmates, and friends have shared similar stories. Although my school life has been drastically impacted, this is not the only part of my day-to-day life that has changed.

Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, I had just begun working as a student worker and administrative assistant for the UCLA School of Engineering. Before this, I had held other positions that didn't work well with my schedule, and I was finally very excited to have a job that did not place so much pressure on me. Unfortunately, when the pandemic escalated, I was told that student workers were not allowed to come in to work anymore, however, they would occasionally be assigning tasks for me to do remotely at home. While this definitely wasn't the worst case scenario, I am barely receiving any form of income anymore. Within the last two months, I've only been paid for two weeks worth of work hours. To make matters worse, I am

not eligible to receive any form of government aid such as a stimulus check or compensation for loss of wages through unemployment. While this has placed a lot of pressure on me, I still recognize that I am very privileged to even be able to work the few hours that I can at home, as many other Americans have been laid off as a result of Covid-19 pressures. In addition to my day-to-day life, the Coronavirus pandemic has caused changes in some of my plans for the future as well.

Covid-19 has forced me to cancel many things that I had planned for the remainder of the year. First, as a pre-law student, I have had to cancel my plans for interning this summer at any law firm, as most internships have been cancelled indefinitely. I am scared that this will jeopardize any chance of me getting into a top law school, causing me much anxiety. Additionally, for the past year, I have saved my money to put towards a European tour that I was planning with my friends for June of 2020. Because of Coronavirus, this trip has been cancelled. While I recognize that this is a problem that is not that serious in comparison to others, I am saddened to think of all the fun events I skipped out on throughout the last year so that I could save my money for this trip. I opted out of many fun road trips, concerts, and plans, so that I could spend three weeks travelling throughout England, France, Italy, and Amsterdam. I am hopeful that I can reschedule this trip for 2021, but I am disappointed that this pandemic has impacted my life to the extent that it has.

Over the last several weeks, I have noticed that the changes in my life have affected my health, both mentally and physically. Since the beginning of the stay-at-home orders, I have been experiencing extreme anxiety. Part of this anxiety stems from my fear of my parents contracting Coronavirus. While I know that I am probably young enough to be able to easily fight off the virus, I am worried that my parents would not. Horror stories of people losing loved ones have

kept me restless, leaving me to only get 3 or 4 hours of sleep at a time. This anxiety has also caused me loss of appetite, severe nausea, and as I mentioned earlier, an inability to focus on school. As my mental health continues to struggle, I also have noticed some of the effects it has had on my physical health. My loss of appetite and nausea have caused me to lose a significant amount of weight; none of my pants fit me properly any more. On top of this, my lack of sleep has caused my skin to break out and sleep aids are not helping very much. While I am struggling with my own issues, I have made sure to remain mindful of how many of those around me have been impacted by coronavirus a lot worse than I have.

Many of my loved ones have been affected by the pandemic in a much more serious fashion. One of my first memories regarding the impacts of Coronavirus is the death of my roommate's grandfather who caught the virus overseas in Iran and died a couple of days later. In countries like Iran, my homeland, that are under heavy political sanctions, hospitals do not have access to as many resources and as much medical technology as we do here in the United States. When my roommate's grandfather grew ill, the hospitals did not have enough room to treat him, and he passed away at home in his sleep. My roommate was incredibly devastated and I found it heartbreaking, so I have spent the last few weeks constantly checking up on her and making sure that she is doing fine emotionally. In regards to my own family, neither of my parents have gone to work in over two months. Luckily, my mother and sister were both given the opportunity to work remotely and still maintain their income. I recognize that we are incredibly lucky that we have not completely lost all sources of income in our family as I am not sure how we would have managed without it. My family has tried our best to find some positives in this situation by acknowledging that we, at the very least, finally get to spend more quality time together that we

normally would not. My current situation has provided me with enough time to think and imagine the future of the world.

I have many thoughts regarding the future that is lying ahead for everyone in the United States. Politically, I believe that this pandemic has been a major blow to the approval rating of the current administration. While many may argue that a pandemic this serious would be difficult to contain no matter which political party was in office, it is undeniable that the United States hesitated and possibly waited too long to react. The first case of Covid-19 was discovered at the beginning of 2020. However, no stay-at-home orders were put in place until mid-march, allowing for many more deaths to take place than they should have. Many speculate that this could potentially cost President Trump his reelection. I believe that the failure of the government to act sooner or in a more effective manner reaffirms that sometimes governments, no matter how vast and powerful, are unable to protect us from certain uncontrollable things, such as pandemics. This is something that has been witnessed throughout history more than once. No matter how many resources a "powerful" nation may have, something as serious as a pandemic or virus is incredibly hard to maintain, especially when there is no known cure or vaccine yet. This was also evident during the infamous outbreak of smallpox, when nations that were considered to be strong suffered such large numbers of fatalities, despite holding so much power and wealth. These nations, just like the United States today, faced significant long-term consequences as well. The one thing that I have learned from this pandemic is that just because the United States is considered to be arguably the strongest superpower in the world, our nation is not, nor will it ever be, immune to natural disasters that are impossible to foresee. Political consequences, however, are not the only ones that we must face.

I am confident that both the economy and our society will face major consequences from the Covid-19 pandemic in the future. I believe that the economy will struggle for a very long time, even after a potential cure for the virus is found. Already, many major companies have been down-sizing to accommodate for the losses that they have suffered over the last few months. Many airlines have even specifically stated that they do not think they will ever be able to operate the same as they did before due to the amount of money that has been lost from the significant decrease in domestic and international travel. In regards to social impacts, I believe that people will definitely begin to practice better health precautions, such as washing their hands more often, now that so much fear regarding death is instilled in the general public. While the reasoning for this is sad, it may be a more positive impact on society in comparison to the other outcomes. Ultimately, while I do recognize that my point of view may be a bit pessimistic, I still hold high hopes that the world will in fact recover from this horrible period of time.

While the majority of the outcomes of this virus have been largely negative, I am determined to continue looking for positive impacts of the situation. Those who have lost loved ones hold a dear place in my heart, and I cannot imagine the heartbreak that they have had to endure. Despite being aware of the rocky future that is yet to come, I truly hope that the world can use its experience with Covid-19 to grow stronger and more resilient in the event that history repeats itself with another pandemic in future years.