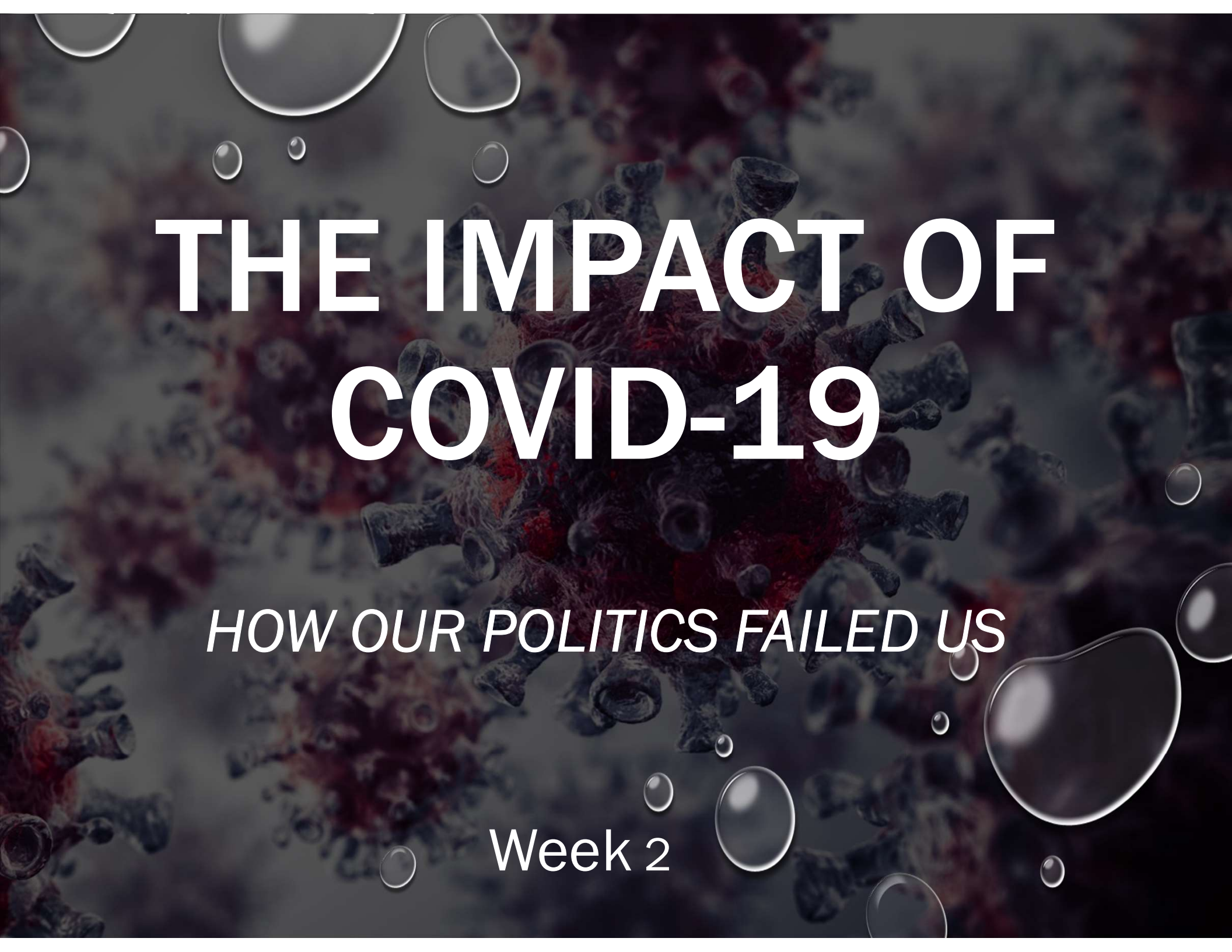




THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

HOW OUR POLITICS FAILED US

Week 2

Ground Rules/Housekeeping

- ✓ Recordings, slides, and other materials are available at: **ARICHKENNEDY.COM**
- ✓ A note about quotes
- ✓ Some of our basic beliefs are likely to be challenged
Thanks for keeping an open mind

Disagreement is OK.....

Disrespect is NOT

REMINDERS:

TRY NOT TO

“MONDAY MORNING QUARTERBACK”

FIX THE PROBLEM,

NOT THE BLAME

TRY TO AVOID ***EMOTIONALITY***

WEEK 1

WHAT HAPPENED?

WEEK 2

ACTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES:

WHAT WORKED AND WHAT DIDN'T?

HOW WAS DISAGREEMENT HANDLED?

WEEK 3

ARE WE PREPARED FOR THE NEXT PANDEMIC?

WHAT LESSONS HAVE WE LEARNED?

WHAT SHOULD WE DO DIFFERENTLY?

IN COVID'S WAKE



HOW OUR POLITICS FAILED US

STEPHEN MACEDO & FRANCES LEE

EVALUATING PERFORMANCE

OUR CONSENSUS LAST WEEK
WAS THAT ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10

THE OVERALL
U.S. RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC
WAS *ABOUT 5*

FROM WEEK 1 - WHAT HAPPENED?

WE ALSO RECOGNIZED THAT VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS OR GROUPS PERFORMED DIFFERENTLY

- GOVERNMENT
 - FEDERAL
 - RED STATES
 - BLUE STATES
- HEALTH CARE
 - FRONT-LINE
 - PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS/ORGANIZATIONS
 - PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES
- THE MEDIA
- BUSINESSES
- THE GENERAL PUBLIC

EVALUATING THE RESPONSE

OTHER PROBLEMS WE IDENTIFIED

WE DIDN'T HAVE A CLEAR STATEMENT OF
THE GOALS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

WE DON'T KNOW WHO, IF ANYONE, WAS SETTING GOALS

OBJECTIVES WERE **INCONSISTENT** AND **CHANGED FREQUENTLY**

COMMUNICATION VARIED CONSIDERABLY

EVALUATING THE RESPONSE

WE ALSO LOOKED AT:

THE DEATH RATE FROM COVID-19
WAS **APPROXIMATELY 1%**
BUT WITH A LOT OF QUESTION MARKS

PANDEMIC WAVES

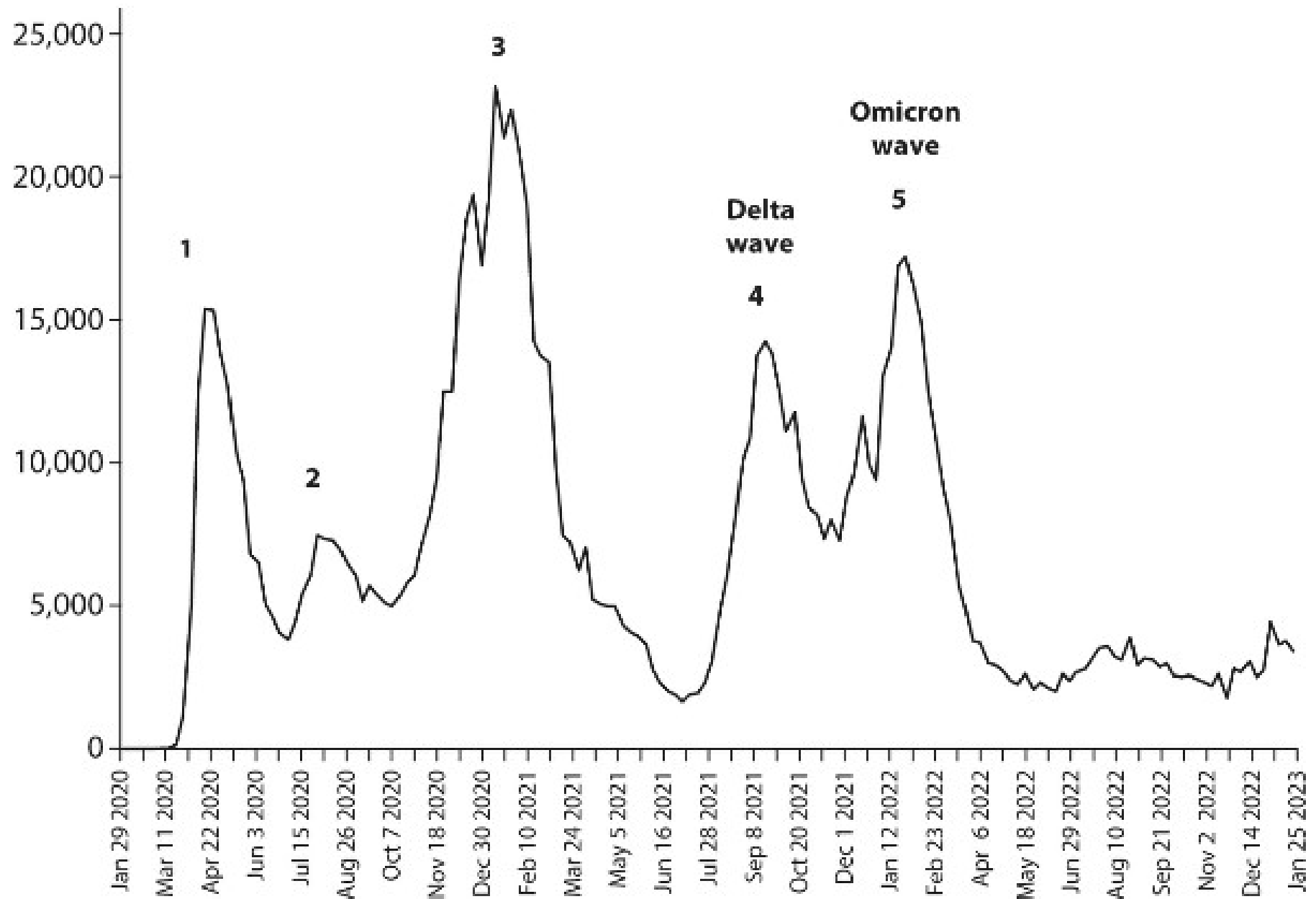


FIGURE 5.6. Covid-19 deaths reported to the CDC, January 2020–February 2023.

EVALUATING THE RESPONSE

WE ALSO LOOKED AT:

AROUND **\$5 TRILLION** IN STIMULUS WAS INJECTED

STIMULUS MONEY MAY HAVE BEEN LARGELY
MAKING UP FOR A POOR RESPONSE

GOVERNMENT STIMULUS AND RECOVERY EFFORTS

STIMULUS PACKAGES

GOVERNMENTS INTRODUCED STIMULUS PACKAGES TO INJECT CAPITAL INTO THE ECONOMY AND SUPPORT CRITICAL SECTORS.



UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS WERE EXPANDED TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL RELIEF TO INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY JOB LOSSES.

BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMS

SUPPORT PROGRAMS HELPED BUSINESSES MAINTAIN OPERATIONS AND RETAIN EMPLOYEES DURING ECONOMIC CHALLENGES.

WHAT WERE THE RECOMMENDATIONS BEFORE COVID-19?

THERE WAS LITTLE EVIDENCE
FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NPIs,
ESPECIALLY AFTER A VIRUS HAS SPREAD

THE COST OF NPIs WAS VERY HIGH
AND PROBABLY OUTWEIGHED THE BENEFITS

WHY WERE THESE RECOMMENDATIONS NOT FOLLOWED?

POLITICIANS FELT THEY HAD TO
“DO SOMETHING”

EXPERTS IN EPIDEMIOLOGY AND PUBLIC HEALTH
FOCUSED MAINLY ON SAVING LIVES
AND DID NOT TAKE OTHER COSTS INTO ACCOUNT

ELITES FAVORED POLICIES THAT PROTECTED THEM
AND DISCOUNTED THE IMPACT
ON OTHER SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION

WHO ARE THE ELITES?

IT DEPENDS ON WHO YOU ASK

A TEXTBOOK DEFINITION:

**A SMALL, POWERFUL GROUP OF PEOPLE
WHO HOLD A DISPROPORTIONATE AMOUNT
OF WEALTH, POWER, OR PRIVILEGE
WITHIN A SOCIETY.**

WHO ARE THE AUTHORS REFERRING TO?

EDUCATED POLICY ELITES

WHO MOST SHAPED THE RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT,

THE PUBLIC HEALTH ESTABLISHMENT,

ACADEMIA,

AND THE MEDIA

FROM THE AUTHORS

“We emphasize the failures of educated elites because they exercised much power under COVID and made some **serious mistakes**,

and because we view them as **vital to the health of constitutional self-government.**

We believe that our own tribe needs to introspect, admit its biases and shortcomings, and ***strive to do better.***

That is the spirit in which we have written this book.”

Macedo, Stephen; Lee, Frances. In Covid's Wake: How Our Politics Failed Us (pp. 8-9). Princeton University Press. Kindle Edition.

WHY WERE THERE RECOMMENDATIONS
NOT FOLLOWED?

CHINA'S
DRACONIAN LOCKDOWNS
SEEMED TO WORK

OTHER COUNTRIES QUICKLY ADOPTED THEM

PERHAPS THIS WAS DONE **TOO READILY**

LET'S FOCUS ON SPECIFIC ISSUES

WHERE DID COVID ORIGINATE?

DO MASKS WORK?

LOCKDOWNS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

SCHOOL CLOSURES

VACCINE ACCEPTANCE

GROUPTHINK AND CONTRARIAN VIEWS

HOW DID COVID START?

TWO THEORIES:

ANIMAL-HUMAN TRANSMISSION, AND THEN SPREAD

A LAB LEAK

DOES IT MATTER?

WHY?

THE “PROXIMAL THEORY”

COVID ORIGINATED IN ANIMALS,
MOST LIKELY BATS,
AND THEN JUMPED TO HUMAN BEINGS
VIA INTERMEDIARY HOSTS

THE JUMP OCCURRED
AT A FOOD MARKET IN WUHAN, CHINA

THE “LAB LEAK THEORY”

“GAIN OF FUNCTION” TESTING ON CORONAVIRUS
WAS BEING DONE AT A LAB IN WUHAN

THE VIRUS ESCAPED
BECAUSE OF INADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS

WHAT IS “GAIN OF FUNCTION” TESTING

EXPERIMENTATION THAT TRIES TO INCREASE THE
TRANSMISSIBILITY AND/OR **VIRULENCE** OF
PATHOGENS

GOF TESTING IS **CLEARLY DANGEROUS**

THE PRIMARY REASON IT IS DONE IS TO
**COUNTERACT THE POSSIBLE USE
OF BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS**

LAB LEAKS

NUMEROUS LAB LEAKS HAVE OCCURRED IN THE PAST

- 1979: ANTHRAX ESCAPE KILLED 60 IN RUSSIA
- 1995: EPIDEMIC OF EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS
- 2004: MULTIPLE CASES OF SARS IN BEIJING
- 2007: OUTBREAK OF “FOOT-AND-MOUTH” DISEASE IN UK
- 2019: LEAK OF “BRUCELLA” INFECTED MORE THAN 10,000
IN CHINA

LAB LEAKS

STEPHEN KING'S "*THE STAND*" AND THE VIDEO GAME/ACTION FILMS "*RESIDENT EVIL*" ARE ABOUT LAB-LEAK APOCALYPSES

U.S. FACILITIES ARE GENERALLY **VERY SAFE**

OTHERS, OUTSIDE THE U.S.,
INCLUDING THE LAB IN WUHAN, ARE **SUSPECT**

WHY WAS THERE DISAGREEMENT?

HIGH-RANKING U.S. HEALTH OFFICIALS

HAD CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

WHEN IT CAME TO THE PANDEMIC'S ORIGINS

PROPONENTS OF THE “LAB LEAK” THEORY WERE
CAST AS CONSPIRACY THEORISTS AND RACISTS

WHY WAS THERE DISAGREEMENT?

THE POLITICAL DIVIDE REDUCED
EFFECTIVE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

THE MEDIA AND SCIENCE ORGANIZATIONS PAID TOO
LITTLE ATTENTION TO POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS AND
CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AMONG SCIENTISTS

THE PATTERN OF THE ORIGIN DEBATE
WAS REPEATED, WITH VARIATIONS,
IN MANY OTHER ASPECTS
OF THE PANDEMIC RESPONSE

DO MASKS WORK?

KEY QUESTIONS:

DOES WEARING A MASK
PROTECT YOU INDIVIDUALLY?

DO MASK MANDATES
REDUCE RATES OF DISEASE
IN THE BROADER COMMUNITY?

KEY POINTS ABOUT MASKS

IT'S COMPLICATED

- Guidance was confusing and changed over time
- What kind of mask are you talking about Cloth vs. N-95
- How is the mask worn?
- To be effective, masks need to be properly fitted and frequently changed
- What's the harm in wearing one?
- An ineffective mask may give a false sense of security

KEY POINTS ABOUT MASKS

IT'S COMPLICATED

- Mask mandates were largely under state control
- They varied greatly from place to place and over time
- Competing Op-Eds in the NY Times made strongly contradictory claims
- The Biden administration took a harder line on mask-wearing than the Trump administration
- Blue states generally followed stricter guidelines; red states were looser

THE STATES AS “LABORATORIES OF DEMOCRACY”

The Cochrane Library, highly regarded in scientific circles, looked at mask wearing and other NPIs

Their review of multiple studies,
both before and after the pandemic, concluded
**there was no evidence that masks (or other NPIs) made
any difference in the spread of COVID-19**

THE POLITICAL DIVIDE

Proponents and opponents
began to divide based on politics

MORE ON THIS LATER.....

SOCIAL DISTANCING

IS SOCIAL DISTANCING EFFECTIVE?

WHO WAS PROTECTED?

WHO WAS EXPOSED?

LOCKDOWNS

MORE HARM THAN GOOD?

IMPACTS OF ISOLATION

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

CHANGES IN DAILY LIFE AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

SOCIAL DISTANCING IMPACT

SOCIAL DISTANCING ALTERED TRADITIONAL SOCIAL INTERACTIONS, LIMITING PHYSICAL CONTACT AND PROMOTING NEW CONNECTION METHODS.



VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION GROWTH

VIRTUAL PLATFORMS BECAME ESSENTIAL FOR MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS, WORK, AND EDUCATION DURING RESTRICTIONS.

STAY AT HOME ORDERS

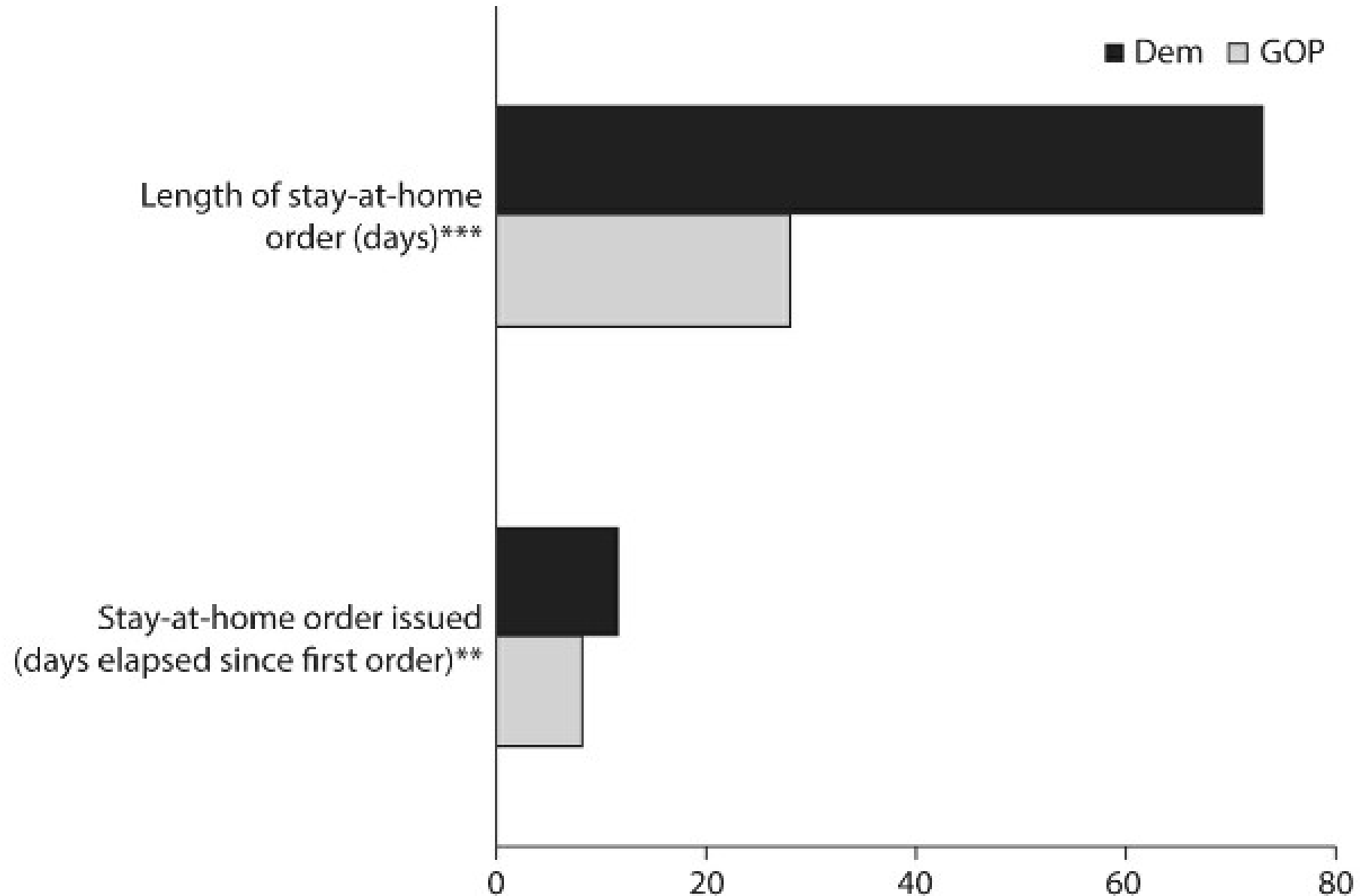


FIGURE 5.1. Length and speed of stay-at-home orders issued, by party of governor (**p < .01; ***p < .001).

“STRINGENCY” OF RESTRICTIONS OVER TIME

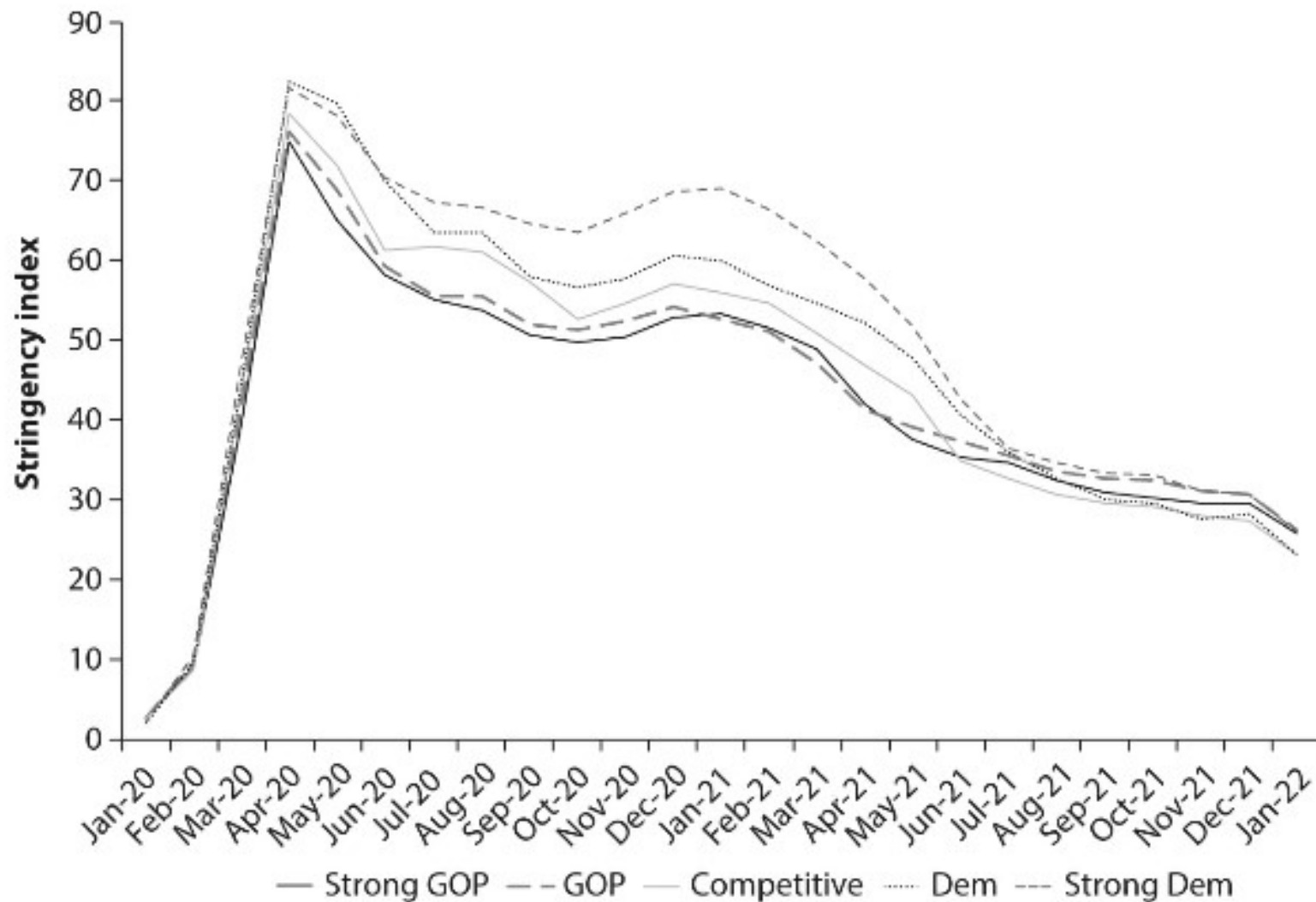


FIGURE 5.3. The stringency of Covid restrictions over time, by state partisanship. *Note:* States are grouped into quintiles of the statewide vote for Democrat Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election. *Source:* Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Tracker, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford, <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker>.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

WERE THEY NECESSARY?

COSTS VS. BENEFITS

WHO WAS BEING PROTECTED?

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

DEMOCRATIC-LEANING STATES
HAD LONGER CLOSURES

TEACHERS' UNIONS PUSHED FOR MORE
RESTRICTIONS THAN THE CDC ADVOCATED

“In December 2020, the Chicago Teachers’ Union tweeted that ‘the push to reopen schools is rooted in sexism, racism, and misogyny.’”

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

REPUBLICAN-LEANING STATES REOPENED SOONER

“.....states that kept schools closed longer did not fare better in Covid outcomes than states that reopened schools more quickly.”

Macedo, Stephen; Lee, Frances. In Covid's Wake: How Our Politics Failed Us (p. 149). Princeton University Press. Kindle Edition.

THE IMPACT ON EDUCATION WAS PROFOUND

STATE PARTISANSHIP ON SCHOOL CLOSURES

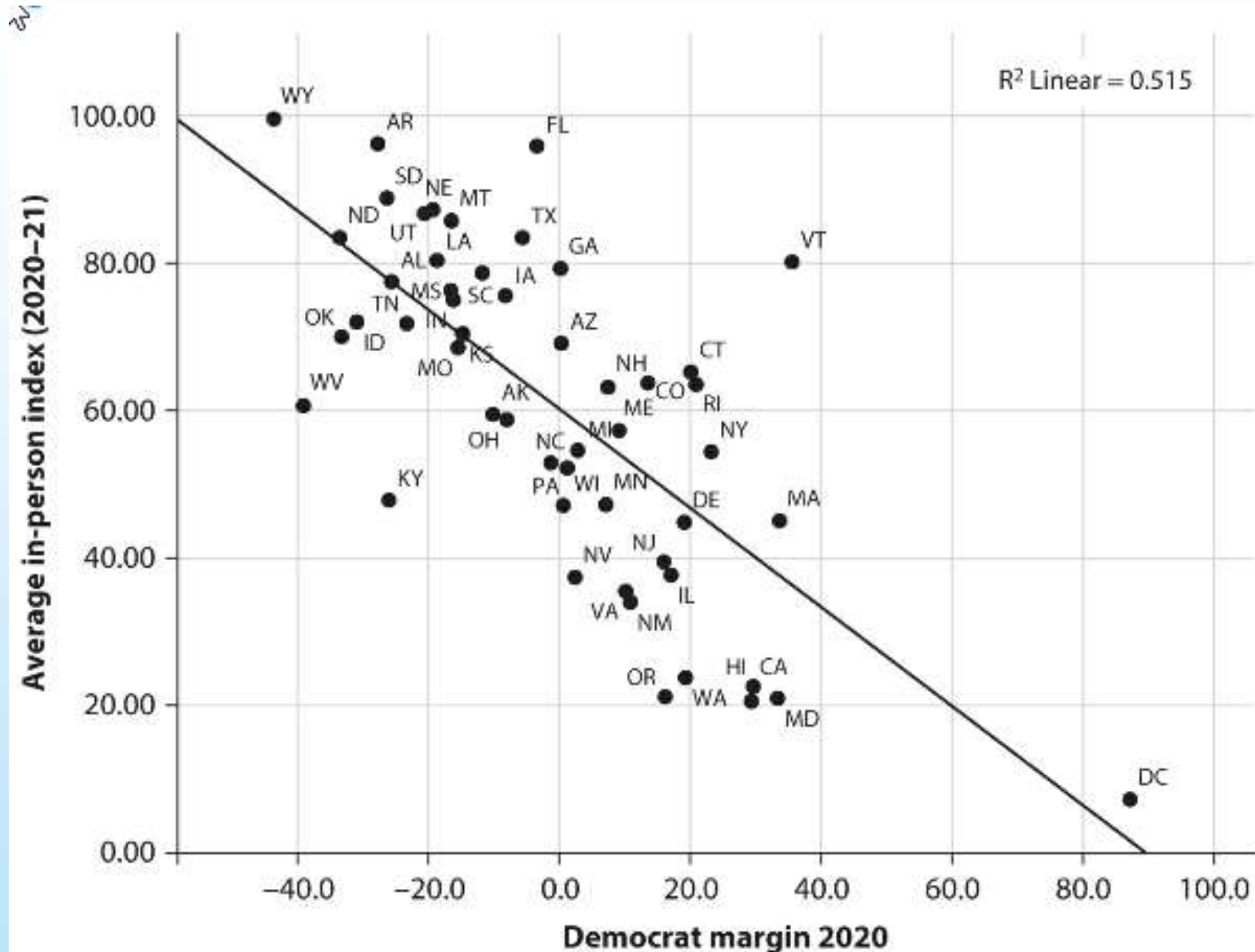


FIGURE 5.2. State partisanship and school closures. *Source:* Burbio's K-12 School Opening Tracker, <https://about.burbio.com/school-opening-tracker>.

THE OVERALL EFFECT ON STATES' COVID MORTALITY

VACCINE UPTAKE IN DEMOCRATIC STATES
MADE A CLEAR DIFFERENCE

VARIATIONS IN STATES' USE OF NPIs
BEFORE VACCINES WERE AVAILABLE
DO NOT SHOW A DIFFERENCE

GROUPTHINK

A PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON IN WHICH
A GROUP'S **NEED FOR HARMONY AND CONSENSUS**
OVERRIDES A **REALISTIC APPRAISAL OF ALTERNATIVES**,
LEADING TO POOR DECISION-MAKING

- ELITE GROUPS OFTEN TEND TOWARD GROUPTHINK
- GROUPTHINK LEADS TO REINFORCING BIASES
- SOMETIMES HAVE A SELF-RIGHTEOUS SENSE OF MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL SUPERIORITY WHICH CAN LEAD TO TELLING AND TOLERATING “NOBLE LIES”

WHAT DO THE FOLLOWING HAVE IN COMMON?

Galileo Galilei

Ignaz Semmelweis

Alfred Wegener

Rachel Carson

Barry Marshall & Robin Warren

NOTABLE CONTRARIANS

GALILEO GALILEI (1564–1642)

- **CONTRARIAN VIEW:** ADVOCATED FOR THE HELIOCENTRIC MODEL (EARTH ORBITS THE SUN), CONTRADICTING THE GEOCENTRIC DOCTRINE ENDORSED BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.
- **CRITICISM:** TRIED FOR HERESY IN 1633, FORCED TO RECANT, AND SPENT HIS LIFE UNDER HOUSE ARREST.
- **VINDICATION:** THE CHURCH FORMALLY ACKNOWLEDGED ITS ERROR IN 1992, AND MODERN ASTRONOMY CONFIRMED HIS THEORIES.

NOTABLE CONTRARIANS

IGNAZ SEMMELWEIS (1818–1865)

- CONTRARIAN VIEW: INSISTED DOCTORS SHOULD WASH HANDS WITH CHLORINATED LIME TO PREVENT CHILD BED FEVER IN MATERNITY WARDS.
- CRITICISM: RIDICULED BY PEERS AND DISMISSED FROM HOSPITALS; HIS MENTAL HEALTH DECLINED, AND HE DIED IN AN ASYLUM.
- VINDICATION: GERM THEORY (DEVELOPED AFTER HIS DEATH) VALIDATED HIS CLAIMS, AND HAND HYGIENE BECAME A MEDICAL STANDARD.

NOTABLE CONTRARIANS

ALFRED WEGENER (1880–1930)

- CONTRARIAN VIEW: PROPOSED THE THEORY OF CONTINENTAL DRIFT (1912), SUGGESTING CONTINENTS MOVE OVER TIME.
- CRITICISM: MOCKED BY GEOLOGISTS FOR LACKING A PLAUSIBLE MECHANISM; CALLED "DELUSIONAL."
- VINDICATION: PLATE TECTONICS THEORY IN THE 1960S CONFIRMED HIS IDEAS, RESHAPING EARTH SCIENCES.

NOTABLE CONTRARIANS

RACHEL CARSON (1907–1964)

- CONTRARIAN VIEW: WARNED IN *SILENT SPRING* (1962) THAT PESTICIDES LIKE DDT THREATENED ECOSYSTEMS AND HUMAN HEALTH.
- CRITICISM: VILIFIED BY CHEMICAL COMPANIES AS "ALARMIST" AND UNSCIENTIFIC.
- VINDICATION: HER WORK SPURRED THE MODERN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT, LEADING TO THE U.S. BANNING DDT IN 1972.

NOTABLE CONTRARIANS

BARRY MARSHALL & ROBIN WARREN (1980S)

- CONTRARIAN VIEW: CLAIMED STOMACH ULCERS WERE CAUSED BY *HELICOBACTER PYLORI* BACTERIA, NOT STRESS OR DIET.
- CRITICISM: DISMISSED BY THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY; MARSHALL FAMOUSLY DRANK THE BACTERIA TO PROVE HIS POINT, DEVELOPING ULCERS.
- VINDICATION: THEIR DISCOVERY REVOLUTIONIZED ULCER TREATMENT, EARNING THEM THE 2005 NOBEL PRIZE IN MEDICINE.

THE CONTRARIANS

THERE WAS A CONSENSUS
AMONG GOVERNMENTS, THE MEDIA, AND THE PUBLIC
ABOUT NON-PHARMACEUTICAL INTERVENTIONS
IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE PANDEMIC

A HANDFUL OF CONTRARIANS
RAISED SERIOUS QUESTIONS
ABOUT WHAT THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

THE CONTRARIANS

IN GENERAL, HOW WERE THEY TREATED?

DOES IT MATTER?

WHY?

CONTRARY OPINIONS

“.....as the weeks ticked by and serious people warned of the need to consider the obvious heavy costs of lockdowns and school closures, too many refused to listen or even allow an open debate and discussion. It was not that we were incapable of considering the costs of favored policies, but too many people were unwilling. Failures of public deliberation involving a rational weighing of costs and benefits had profound distributive consequences that should be especially troubling to egalitarians.”

Macedo, Stephen; Lee, Frances. In Covid's Wake: How Our Politics Failed Us (p. 15). Princeton University Press. Kindle Edition.

THE POLITICAL DIVIDE

Proponents and opponents
began to divide based on politics

WHILE “IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO CARICATURE **ALL**
REPUBLICAN LEADERS AS **UNCONCERNED ABOUT THE VIRUS.**”

Over time, opinions and policy
diverged more and more distinctly
based on political partisanship

THE POLITICAL DIVIDE

The divide was intensified due to the lack of trust created by Donald Trump

TRUMP'S "*SHOOT FROM THE HIP*" STYLE,
WHILE POPULAR WITH HIS BASE
WAS ILL-SUITED TO THIS CRISIS

AT THE SAME TIME, MANY OF HIS OPPONENTS REJECTED
ANYTHING TRUMP SAID
OUT OF HAND

THE POLITICAL DIVIDE

THIS LED TO
A **LACK OF ANALYSIS**

AND

NO CONSIDERATION OF **OPPOSING VIEWS**

THE RESULT WAS
TOO LITTLE DEBATE ABOUT GOALS
NOT ENOUGH **COST/BENEFIT** REVIEW

END OF WEEK 2