

# How to improve queue justice in disaster settings?

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**Disaster**



**Bioethics**

# What is a queue?

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- “a phenomenon ordering time and space”  
(Corbridge, 2008)
  - visible vs. invisible, real vs. virtual  
queues
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# Queue

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- *"[..] one of the most human, most moral of all social encounters precisely because it has the least external organization and requires the purest commitment to the interactional order for its own sake"*  
(Goffman, 1983)



**JAPAN: An aerial view of a queue of people waiting for water on school grounds in Sendai, 2011.**

**Picture: REUTERS**



PAKISTAN. Sindh floods, 2011. Patients waiting for Medical treatment.

<http://www.umtrust.org/news/um-continues-flood-relief-efforts/>



PAKISTAN. People wait in line for medicines from a mobile clinic.  
By Chris Herlinger/CWS



HAITI: Haitians line up to receive food and water at a U.S. Army distribution point in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 2010.

# Research question

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- Does existing research studies point out any problems of queue justice in disaster settings?
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# Methodology

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- Systematic review of research literature
    - systematic collection and coding of articles
    - looking for connections and second-order concepts
  - Time frame: 2010-2013
  - Key words: `queu*`, “waiting in line”
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<b>Journal</b>	<b>Number of articles</b>
International Journal of Disaster risk science	2
Disaster Prevention and Management	2
Journal of Surgical Research	1
Pediatric Critical Care Medicine	1
Prehospital and Disaster Medicine	3
Disasters	3
International Journal of Mass Emergencies & Disasters	1

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# RESULTS

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# Queuing vs. lottery

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*“There is, for example, agreement about allocation based on need, benefit, and conservation of resources, but no consensus regarding the relative benefits and detriments of queuing and lottery. Additional work is needed to engage the public in this discussion.”*

(Matheny Antommara et al., 2011)

# Advantages and disadvantages

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## Queuing

- + easy to administer
- + knowing one's place in the line may provide comfort
- queuing is not truly random
- it may be influenced by ethically irrelevant considerations
- persons with better information, transportation, connections may enter the queue earlier

## Lottery

- + assure equality of opportunity
- + minimize judgments about individuals' social value
- it may be difficult to define the rules for administering lotteries
- individuals may perceive leaving the decision to chance as an abdication of moral responsibility

# Queuing vs. lottery

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*“Both queuing (first-come, first-served) and lottery provide fair equality of opportunity and are simple to apply. In certain situations, a lottery may be preferable, because morally irrelevant social and economic factors may influence how rapidly people enter and progress through the system.”*

(Matheny Antommara et al., 2011)

# Evolution of a queue

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*“Current triage systems provide a “snapshot” and accordingly do not identify the evolution of the clinical presentation of an individual patient, or the evolution of a queue (ie, new arrivals to the waiting room) in a serial triage setting” (Turris & Lund, 2012)*

# The “right place and the right time”

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*“At the village level, it was very much about who received and who didn’t receive. [..] some people gained a lot while others didn’t, because they weren’t in the right line or the right queue or they weren’t at the right place at the right time. And some got nothing. All of this short-circuited people’s grieving.”*  
(Scharffscher, 2011)



# Vulnerability

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- Vulnerable populations:
    - elderly
    - children
    - woman
    - single parents
    - persons with disabilities
    - etc.
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# An example: single mothers

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*"Single mothers cannot afford to spend time in long lines waiting for resources. The women we interviewed were already experiencing many time constraints related to juggling the responsibilities of childcare and employment. This, paired with limited social networking abilities, made their need for quick, easily accessible food and cash assistance a top priority."* (Tobin-Gurley et al., 2010)

# Risks

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*“The beneficiaries have to wait long hours in queues: this is rather humiliating and it creates security risks in a context where certain parties regularly employ indiscriminate bombing as a war tactic.”*  
(Grünnewald, 2012)

# Conclusions

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- There still is lack of research and consensus regarding advantages of lottery vs. queuing for allocation of scarce resources
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# Conclusions

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- There is a need for ongoing research, (potentially during the disaster), to develop appropriate queueing rules protecting vulnerable groups
  - Public engagement process is crucial for drafting ethics policies that reflect communities and cultural background (incl. queuing)
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Thank you!

