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# COVID-19 PANDEMIC, SOCIAL CLASS, AND ONLINE INSTRUCTION SURVIVABILITY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN THE K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM

Antonio Leanos

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COVID-19 PANDEMIC, SOCIAL CLASS, AND ONLINE INSTRUCTION  
SURVIVABILITY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES WITH  
CHILDREN IN THE K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

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by  
Antonio Leanos

May 2022

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study highlights the problems that distance learning has had towards low-income families who had children in K-12 system enrolled in distance learning during Covid-19. Major themes that were presented were separation of being a teacher/parent, technical issues, social interactions, communication, and patience. Parents expressed their survivability with their children enrolled in distance learning during Covid-19 and shared their positive and negative experiences with the schools their children attended. The K-12 Education System in the United States uses a one-size-fits-all instructional approach that does not distinguish between low-income students and their middle-to-high income counterparts. Based on the existing research and the data that was collected for this research, it can benefit the educational system to better understand how to address the issues that families dealt with during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## PROBLEM FORMULATION

### Scope of the Problem

The K-12 Education System in the United States uses a one-size-fits-all instructional approach that does not distinguish between low-income students and their middle-to-high income counterparts. This is problematic for two main reasons: (1) more than half of the student body in the K-12 system are low-income in 2013 (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2018; Southern Education Foundation, 2015; Suitts, 2020) and (2) low-income students face more socioeconomic barriers than do those in the upper income bracket. These barriers include but are not limited to lower educational achievement (Kappahn, 2018), greater likelihood for school dropout (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021), and poorer school attendance (Kappahn, 2018).

There is an educational achievement gap towards students who are Hispanic and black compared to white students in K-12. F. Cadelle Hemphill took mathematical scores from grades 4, and 8 to see if there was a difference between the different races who all come from low-income families. F. Cadelle Hemphill (2011) research showed that on average students that were from a higher income family had higher scores than their counter parts who were low-income. Hemphill's (2011) research further showed that white students who were

from low-income families there had a 21-point gap difference to Hispanic students who were not from low-income families.

Another researcher named Bohrnstedt conducted research in a school where majority of students were black, but still had a few white students enrolled. Bohrnstedt's (2015) research showed that white students were still over performing and getting better scores than the majority of black students in the school. The purpose of Bohrnstedt's research was to understand what factors are affecting the majority of black students to score lower than the white students. The research showed that there was a difference between the parents of the students in their education level. There were more white students who had parents with a higher education compared to black students.

#### Existing Macro Interventions that Address the Problem

There is a broad range of macro educational interventions that help low-income students in K-12. Lips (2019) identified as many as 22 such interventions. Of Lips' (2019) list, nine major policies—the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the Project Head Start of 1965, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, the Emergency Immigrant Education Assistance Act of 1984, the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015—deserve some consideration. A description of each of these educational interventions is provided below:

### The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

With the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 the United States is to provide financial assistance to schools in areas where low-income families reside. According to the education act, provided in Lips' (2019) list, congress made it a policy to the United States to provide financial assistance towards low-income students. The purpose of act is to help the educational programs in schools to meet the needs of the children from low-income families. The intention is to help students who come from low-income families, receive a better education from their schools that reside in a low-income area.

### Project Head Start of 1965

Project Head Start of 1965 was established by the Johnson Administration to provide childhood care for low-income families. According to Lips' (2019) list, Project Head Start was created to break the cycle of poverty. The purpose of Project Head Start was to meet the needs of children from low-income families to better meet their emotional, psychological, nutritional, and social needs. The purpose is to help and prevent preschool children from low-income families from any hardships the family faces, and to meet their basic human needs. Without a solid income or solid structure in the household every family member is in danger and therefore Project Head Start was implemented to not let families suffer from poverty.

### The Bilingual Education Act of 1968

One of the biggest issues that families face is language barriers. There are families who still do not speak or understand English and rely on their children for guidance and translation when faces with language barriers. The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 was made to help local schools create programs to assist families who faced language barriers (Lips, 2019). This act ensured that schools should have the funds available to help students who face a language barrier towards their education. Schools are to receive funds to create educational programs for students who struggle reading, writing, and speaking the English language. The Bilingual Education Act was created to help all students from different backgrounds and allow students to overcome their language barriers.

#### The Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974

The Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 was created to give equal treatment and opportunities to all students regardless of race, sex, and skin color. There was no favoritism towards specific students and this act gave each student the same opportunities as everyone else. No state was allowed to deny any student the same educational opportunities based on the student's race, color, sex, or national origin (Lips, 2019). The purpose of the Equal Educational Opportunities Act was to remove segregation in public schools and offer services to students to overcome language barriers and was also created to help remove racism in the educational system.

#### The Emergency Immigrant Education Assistance Act of 1984

Not all students are born in the United States, and due to immigrants coming from other areas around the world the Emergency Immigrant Education Assistance Act of 1984 was created. The Emergency Immigrant Education Assistance Act was implemented to help foreigners achieve a proper education and develop skills to use in their future to better help their families and themselves. This act allowed the Secretary of Education to provide federal funding to support state and local education agencies (Lips, 2019). The act was created to help immigrants receive an education regardless of coming from a different country. Schools are able to accept immigrant students and help them receive a proper education.

#### The McKinny Homeless Assistance Act of 1987

There are families who live in poverty and cannot afford things for themselves and struggle with money and providing for their children. The McKinny Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 helps children attend school for free if their family is considered homeless. This act offers a federal grant program for education agencies to support education for homeless youth (Lips, 2019). The McKinny Homeless Assistance Act has established two policies for the United States. (1) Each educational agency in the State shall give access to a free appropriate public education to each homeless youth or a child of a homeless individual. (2) Homeless youth or a child of a homeless individual are offered a free and appropriate public education (Lips, 2019).

#### The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994

The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 believes that an individual's life relies on the quality and the lives of others (Lips, 2019). The act was created to help the nation's highest poverty schools. The intention of the act is to help local schools receive extra funding to improve their education programs in order to help students who come from low-income parents. The act was created to help students receive a better education in order to help their families in the future and give them a chance to create a better future for themselves and their families.

#### The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 made it a requirement for the schools to measure their yearly progress, and make sure that students were accounted for, practices that have proven effective, parent options, and flexibility for school funds (Lips, 2015). The purpose of the No Child Left Behind Act was to close student achievement gaps and provide students an equal opportunity to obtain a proper education. For progress to be recorded the schools administer tests to the students to meet or exceed state standards.

#### Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 was created to help disadvantaged students. The purpose of the act is to provide all children equal and fair opportunity to receive a high-quality education (Lips, 2019). The intention of the act is to make sure that students do not have an educational gap. This act wants all students to succeed and be at the same level as other students within their

grade level. The belief in this act was that a high-quality education can help close educational gaps between students (Lips, 2019).

### Rationale and Purpose of the Study

The Covid-19 pandemic is likely to increase the disparity level between the racial groups with low-income students reporting lower levels of Zoom engagement during virtual learning. Not only is their engagement for virtual learning dropping, but multiple students also do not do their homework and their grades are suffering significantly (Natanson, 2020). Some students who were just used to having one teacher now have multiple teachers for each subject. Students are expected to transition from an in-classroom environment into a virtual classroom with little to no social interaction with other students. Minority students and those living in high poverty areas are the most at-risk with regard to virtual learning, making the educational gaps even more salient (Natanson, 2020). Social workers have an ethical obligation to identify and address social problems (National Association of Social Workers, 2017). The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of Covid-19 on low-income families with children in the K-12 system. This study addresses the following three related questions:

1. What are the experiences of families with children in the K-12 system with respect to virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. How do families with children in the K-12 system deal with the online instructional approach during the Covid-19 pandemic?

3. From the perspective of families, what are ways to help children learn during a crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic?

#### Significance of the Project for Students from Low-Income Families

There has not been enough research to determine that the one-size-fits all instructional approach is helpful for students in K-12 that come from low-income families. With online learning being implemented for the Covid-19 pandemic it has significantly affected student's academics, and their families. Students are not engaged with online learning and there are students who dislike the idea of attending school from a computer monitor. Online learning has isolated students from one another including their teacher. Students cannot grow and socialize within their class, and afterwards students are left to do things on their own and expected to be adults and become independent at a young age. Children are meant to be with other children and socialize and build their personality and create bonds with other students. Children from low-income families are having to use online education as an imperfect substitute (Agostinelli, 2020).

The findings of this current study can help future social workers attend to students in a K-12 educational system and help the needs to be met if they come from a low-income family. This application can help social workers be able to service low-income families and offer opportunities for change to occur within the school district and appropriately service students who come from low-income families. This study can help expand the research of how the education system can adapt and change their policies to better help students of low-income

families and to consider an instructional approach that can help them. There is no one solution to solve all problems and with this one-size-fits all instructional approach is an example that it does not consider if the student comes from a low-income family. There is also racial disparity in schools with proportionately the lowest income, as measured by the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program. The National Center for Education Statistics (2018) noted that in fall 2018, the percentage of students which of high poverty were Black students (45 percent), followed by Hispanic students (44 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native students (37 percent), Pacific Islander students (24 percent), students of Two or more races (17 percent), Asian students (14 percent), and White students (8 percent). Survival is what low-income students are dealing with and there needs to be change in the educational system to better fit the needs for these low-income students. This study can contribute to social service provision on a macro and micro-level by understanding the use of virtual educational practices and learn about what is and is not effective when moving to virtual education, particularly for low-income families.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will help the readers have a good understanding about research studies conducted to help resolve the issues of online learning for students who come from low-income families during the covid-19 pandemic. This chapter also help readers understand the limitations of previous research and highlights the contribution of the current study to the alleviation of the problem. Furthermore, this chapter presents an account of theoretical frameworks that guide this current study as well as a critical analysis of them, using the Joseph and Macgowan's Theory Evaluation Scale (2019).

#### Synthesis of the Literature

The Covid-19 pandemic has hit the world hard and, in the United States, kept most children out of the physical classrooms from early 2020 through at least a portion of 2021. There is a strong interest from the scientific community about the impact of the pandemic on schools (Agostinelli et al., 2020; Azevedo et al., 2021; Bubb & Jones, 2020; Domingue et al., 2021; Engzell et al., 2021; Grewenig et al., 2020; Joshi et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2021; Parolin et al., 2021). Yet, only a few research studies focus on understanding how online learning has affected students who come from low-income families during the Covid-19 pandemic. Among them is the work of Sara Bubb and Mari-Ana Jones (2020), Elisabeth Grewenig (2020), and Benjamin W. Domingue (2021).

Bubb & Jones (2020) research was conducted with 2021 participants consisted of teachers, parents, pupils (6-16 years), and school leaders in a Norwegian municipality in 2020. The purpose of the study was to find out how parents, teachers, and pupils (1 -10 grade) experienced home-school and if a continuation of online learning was a possibility even after schools reopened. The method of research collected was the use of online surveys with a four-point Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree', with each question allowing for the participant to add their comments with the space given.

Findings showed that most of the 2021 students surveyed enjoyed online learning and felt more independent in terms of their studies. Heavily invested technology was already established in most of the schools and the use of online learning was implemented before the lockdown of online learning occurred from Covid-19. Most pupils had tablets or laptops and were already used to doing their schoolwork online. Some teachers, though, reported some difficulties adapting to online learning when in-person teaching was their strongest trait. The findings in Bubb & Jones' (2020) study did not report on the economic status of the sample. Hence, it is possible that the study participants did not have low-income backgrounds. Indeed, the schools already made massive investments in distance learning even before the pandemic aroused. As a result, online instruction was a success for the students. Had the study conducted with low-income students, the results could have been different.

Grewenig (2020) conducted a study in Germany in 2020 to explore if low-achieving students were particularly affected by the lack of educator support during the Covid-19 school closures. The method of research collected was the use of an online survey given to a total of 1,099 parents of school aged children. The survey Grewenig (2020) used asked about hours children spent on their studies before and after school closures, distinguishing school-related activities, activities deemed conducive to child development, and activities deemed detrimental to child development. Results revealed that that learning time correlates with achievement, as high-achieving students were spending more time to their academics compared to low-achieving students. In addition, low achievers were less likely to have any type of online lessons and any type of teacher contact more than once a week. As for Bubb & Jones' (2020) study, there was no emphasis on students from low-income households.

Domingue (2021) used the oral reading fluency (ORF) tool to assess students and their reading capabilities in 111 U.S. school districts during Covid-19 school closures. The primary goal was to determine the impact of the pandemic on students' reading readiness. The findings in Dominique's (2021) research demonstrated that there was a loss of learning for younger students particularly in Grades 2-3. Here again, this study did not focus solely on low-income students.

### Limitations of the Existing Literature

Based on the studies conducted by Sara Bubb and Mari-Ana Jones (2020), Elisabeth Grewenig (2020), and Benjamin W. Domingue (2021) there has been little research with the relationship of Covid-19 and online learning. Majority of the studies don't define the parent's income as a criterion when selecting participants for the study. The studies are using comparison of education levels of parents, and students lacking an educator support to define the relationship with covid and online learning. There is a difference when comparing high and low-income parents since there are many challenges that students and families face that their counter parts do not deal with. Their white counterparts are usually from a higher income family and do not make a majority of the student body at a school. Studying low-income families that have their children engaged in distance learning can help social workers better understand and meet the needs for families who are struggling during the Covid-19 pandemic. Understanding their survivability and how they are overcoming such obstacles can help make changes necessary to meet the needs of low-income families and allow the students to be successful. All education facilities need to understand that low-income students are not capable of the same things as higher-income students.

#### Synthesis of Theoretical Perspectives Guiding This Research

There are two theories that can help obtain better knowledge and information to help low-income families with children in the K-12 education system. The first is Critical Theory, which emphasizes that understanding the different viewpoints and the focus on power within the social system can give

better insight and knowledge towards change (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005). The second is Social Justice Theory, whose purpose is to give equal human rights and opportunities to every person in society (Rawls, 1971). The usage of both theories can gather information to understand the survivability of low-income families with children in the K-12 education system and what type of social changes need to be addressed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Using the Critical Theory gives social workers the ability to recognize personal and political problems that relate to one another, provide social care, and eliminate oppression (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005). Critical Theory was developed by Max Horkheimer during the 1930s. According to Berendzen (2009), this theory has four major themes. The first theme is suffering and happiness, which is about how combining compassion and the ability to overcome one's own suffering and generating motivation for the oppressed to join and create change. The second theme relates to the role rationality plays in emancipatory movements. Horkheimer believed that society would prefer to solve issues as a whole, rather than considering the effects it can have towards individuals within the society. About the third theme—the combined critiques of metaphysics and positivism—Horkheimer believed that there was no real consideration for the study of human life and that there are multiple factors to consider when studying human life and there was no one way of doing such research.

Finally, the fourth theme is the methodology of interdisciplinary social research. Regarding this theme, Horkheimer believed that the truth should be carried out and argued against one sided counter statements (Berendzen, 2009).

Social justice is created to help give people who are underprivileged opportunities and equal rights (Joseph, 2020). Social Justice Theory was developed in 1971 by philosopher John Rawls. According to Rawls, equality does not necessarily mean fairness. Hence, John Rawls believed that there should be fairness for all people, and not just equality (Ekmekci, 2015; Rawls, 1971). Rawls believed justice is achieved when every individual has access to all the services available (Ekmekci, 2015; Rawls, 1971). The social justice theory was created to allow all people the opportunity to get the services required to grow, develop, and advanced in life. As explained by Rawls (1971) the human agency is society as a whole and if there is an issue or dilemma within the community it needs to be addressed and heard by the people within that region.

#### Critical Analysis of Theoretical Perspectives Guiding this Research

With respect to measuring the quality of theories in social work, Joseph and Macgowan's

Theory Evaluation Scale (TES) is the only tool that exists in the literature (2019).

The TES measures theories and gives them an overall score depending how strong the theory is in certain criterions. All criterions have a score of 1-5 with high being the strongest. Once all the points have been added up the overall

score will determine if the theory is considered poor (9 points), fair (10–19 points), good (20–29 points), or excellent (30 and above) (Joseph & Macgowan, 2019). Applying the TES will help determine the overall scores and quality of both the Critical Theory and the Social Justice Theory.

Critical Theory had an overall score of 36 on the TES (see Table 1). This score considers the theory to be of excellent quality (Joseph & Macgowan, 2019). This theory has great coherence, conceptual clarity, philosophical assumptions, historical development, utility, and human agency. However, there were three criteria where the theory scored low was (testability, empiricism, and boundaries). Hence, this theory has room for improvement.

Meanwhile, the analysis determined that the Social Justice Theory has an overall score of 37 (see Table 1). This score indicates that the theory has excellent quality (Joseph & Macgowan, 2019). This score is also consistent with Joseph's (2020) evaluation of Social Justice Theory. In fact, Joseph (2020) found that this theory does not (1) outline and explain its philosophical assumptions very well, (2) provide adequate ways to be tested and proven false, and (3) generate enough empirical evidence. However, the Social Justice Theory is strong with regard to coherence, conceptual clarity, historical evolution, scope of competence, utility, and human agency.

**Table 1. Critical Theory, and the Social Justice Theory with Joseph & Macgowan's Theory Evaluation Scale (TES)**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Score</b>	
		<b>CT*</b>	<b>SJT**</b>
1	The theory has coherence.	5	5
2	The theory has conceptual clarity.	5	5
3	The theory clearly outlines and explains its philosophical assumptions.	5	3
4	The theory describes its historical roots in connection with previous research.	5	5
5	The theory can be tested and proven false via observational and experimental methods.	2	2
6	The theory has been critically tested and validated through empirical evidence.	2	2
7	The theory explains its boundaries or limitations.	2	5
8	The theory accounts for the systems within which individuals interact with people around them.	5	5
9	The theory recognizes humans as active agents within their environment.	5	5
<b>Overall score</b>		<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>
<i>Theory quality based on overall TES score: Excellent for Critical Theory</i>			
<i>Theory quality based on overall TES score: Excellent for Social Justice Theory</i>			
*Critical Theory			
**Social Justice Theory			

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Introduction

The goal of this study is understanding the survivability of low-income families with children enrolled in the K-12 system during the Covid-19 pandemic. This chapter contains the following sections: research ethics/protection of human subjects, research design, sampling methods, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, sensitizing concepts, and data analysis. Each of these sections will be described in the following paragraphs.

#### Ethics/Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher will take reasonable steps to protect the study participants. First, the research will complete the *Social Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel training* as a prerequisite for the California State University San Bernardino Institutional Review Board application. An addition, there will be an informed consent about the study. When recording Zoom will record and store a caption dialogue of the conversation. The research will protect the privacy of the participants and the confidentiality of their data. Participants will not have their private information shared with anyone besides the research team. All data collected will be stored in a secure location and all paper and pencil files will be destroyed 3 years after the completion of the study. The file will be stored on a

file on the computer and only the researcher will know how to access and locate the file. There is no risk based on the participants who take part in the study. Although not anticipated, there may be some discomfort in answering some of the questions. The participant is not required to answer and can skip the question or end their participation

### Research Design

This study will embrace an exploratory research design to determine the survivability of low-income K-12 students and their families during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research will be qualitative in nature. The qualitative research paradigm has many advantages, including allowing researchers to work with fewer participants and develop a deeper understanding of study respondents' life experiences (Grinnell & Unrau, 2013; Royse, 2017). Although its findings are often not generalizable, qualitative study is essential for meaning and context regarding study participants (Grinnell & Unrau, 2013; Royse, 2017). Hence, the qualitative approach in this research will help the researcher assess, among other things, the coping mechanisms of families throughout the pandemic

### Sampling

This study was conducted under a non-probability sampling methodology. In particular, the researcher will use convenience and snowball sampling to recruit participants via personal contacts and the sharing of the study flyer on personal social media accounts and ask participants to share the recruitment information with others. This study targeted 12 participants, however, ultimately

only six participants completed the study.. All participants who could participate in this study must be age 18 and over. All participants must be parents who have students enrolled in a K-12 school district in Southern California throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Participants who speak English or Spanish could participate in this research. If participants who were not able to read English or Spanish, the researcher explained to the participant verbally what the research is about and had the participant verbally agree to participate in the research if they choose to. The goal was to determine their experiences with online education during the pandemic

#### Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

The research collected primary data for this study by means of semi-structured interviews with participants, using Zoom. Before meeting with the participant, the participant had to give consent to the interview and consent for the information to be recorded. Recording devices were used if the participant allows for it. If for any reason the participant did not give consent for the recording device, then note taking was the next option. There was an explanation of what the researcher will take notes on and even show the participant at the end if the participant requests to see the notes taken by the researcher. During the process of the interview the participant was informed that the information received from the interview will solely be used for the conducted study and nothing else. Acknowledging that their information is private and there will be no one besides the researcher who has access to the information. Confidentiality is

a priority within the conducted research and the safety of the participant. The researcher developed an interview guide made of open-ended questions about the purpose of the study. For Spanish speaking participants the interview questions were translated in Spanish. Questions were asked, and the researcher answered any questions or give clarification on anything the participant wishes to be explained better for their understanding. With Spanish speaking participants everything was explained in Spanish by the researcher to ensure they fully understand everything that is being ask for the participant. At the end of the interview the participant was thanked for their time and contribution to the research. Upon completion of the study, all of the participants were contacted, the findings were discussed and organized, findings were safely stored away, and the paper was submitted to the social work department at California State University, San Bernardino.

### Sensitizing Concepts

This study includes several key words or sensitizing concepts. Below are the most relevant ones.

#### K-12 System

The K-12 system stands for 'from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade'. The K-12 system is broken down into three stages of education: elementary school (Grades K-5), middle school (Grades 6-8) and high school (Grades 9-12).

#### Low-Income Families

Families whose income do no exceed 80% of the median family income for their area.

### Online Learning

Education that takes place over the internet also referred to as e-learning. Online learning does not take place in a traditional class environment.

### Data Analysis

The researcher used Zoom transcription features or transcribed the recorded interviews himself. Next, using a Word document, the researcher assigned a number to each participant to preserve the confidentiality of the data. Then the researcher analyzed the data by hand, using thematic analysis procedures. A codebook was created based on participants' responses. Similar codes were grouped together and arranged into themes.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This chapter provides the data that was collected through interviews from parents who are low-income and have children of color in K-12 enrolled in distance learning. The participants' responses were gathered through individual interviews. Demographic information is presented on the parents who participated in the study including notable themes that were discussed and evaluated.

#### Demographic Data

The qualitative study consisted of 6 participants who were currently having children of color who were enrolled in distance learning in K-12. The participants reported in the interview to be Hispanic and ages 25, 29, 35, 38, 37, and 41. Participants' highest level of education consisted of high school, some college, associate's degree, and bachelor's degree. 4 of the 6 participants were males and 2 of the 6 participants was female. All participants resided in the San Bernardino County each having 1 or more child enrolled in distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Participants also informed of their annual income with 5 out of 6 participants stating they made a little above \$20,000 and 1 participant making under \$20,000. Based on the annual income from the participants they were making barely enough money at their jobs and were

considered to be low-income due to the participants meeting the \$20,000 - \$29,000 mark and having one participant being just under \$20,000.

The table listed below demonstrates the demographic data gathered for this research.

Table 2. Demographics Statistics

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Children Enrolled In Distance Learning</b>	<b>Annual Income</b>
Participant 1	Male	Married	High School Diploma	38	Hispanic	2	Under \$20,000
Participant 2	Female	Married	Some College	41	Hispanic	2	\$20,000 - \$29,000
Participant 3	Female	Married	Some College	29	Hispanic	2	\$20,000 - \$29,000
Participant 4	Male	Married	Some College	35	Hispanic	1	\$20,000 - \$29,000
Participant 5	Male	Divorced	Associates Degree	37	Hispanic	3	\$20,000 - \$29,000
Participant 6	Male	Single	Bachelor's Degree	29	Hispanic	1	\$20,000 - \$29,000

All participants participated being interviewed via Zoom with live transcripts being recorded during the session. All participants had their camera on and were also explained that their information will remain confidential and that only the researcher would have access to the information taken from the interview. There was no video recording, and the participants' names were changed to pseudonyms such as participant 1, participant 2, etc.

The questions being asked were open ended questions along with some yes or no responses and allowed for the parents to freely speak about their concerns and feelings towards the certain topics of the questions being asked. All parents were explained the informed consent (APPENDIX A) and after participants verbally agreed to participate in the interview the questions being asked were taken from the interview questions (APPENDIX B) which had a variety of open-ended questions. The participants were informed that the questions are exactly the same as the questionnaire questions, but the interview allowed for more self-expression and one-on-one conversations, which can lead to more genuine responses to the questions being asked. The participants were also giving the choice to skip any question they felt uncomfortable to answer or chose not to answer. None of the participants chose to skip or not answer any of the questions being asked during the interview. The researcher took notes and transcribed each interview onto an individual Word documents. All materials will be destroyed three years after completion of the study.

## Themes

The researcher went over the transcripts and found the following themes that emerged from the interviews that showed what struggles families who had children of color in K-12 enrolled in distance learning went through during the Covid-19 pandemic. The themes that were found were 1) Separation of being a teacher/parent, 2) Technical issues, 3) Social interactions, 4) Communication, and 5) Patience.

### Separation of Being a Teacher/Parent

Struggles that happen when it came to distance learning was having to be a teacher and a parent at the same time. Some students felt that their parents were there to be nice at all times and that there was no discipline when it came to their studies and education from home. Participant 2 recalled how they had to distinguish the difference between being a parent and a teacher:

What has been difficult has being able to understand the role of being a teacher and being a parent at the same time. Like we want our children to understand they need to get their work done, but at the same time we do not want them thinking we are against them, or they see us as Mom & Dad when it is school time (Participant 2, personal communication, February 2022).

Participant 3 was expressing how working can also affect how being a teacher/parent at home puts stress on the family:

It has been really hard on the family because me and my husband work, and then we have to come back home and help our kids with their

homework and we are tired and we still have to cook and clean the house, and it is like how are we expected to be teachers when we are parents first and then we have our own jobs to worry about because if we stop working then we lose money and we cannot support our families. The teachers should be capable of teaching our kids and we shouldn't have to stress about our kids and their homework and their grades (Participant 3, personal communication, February 2022).

It can be quite difficult having to be your children's teacher and their parent at the same time since, children should see you as their parents and guardians and now the parent has to be a teacher while being able to work and do their own responsibilities since Covid-19 has affected their lives due to their children participating in distance learning.

### Technical Issues

Technology has been used world-wide and it helps the people on this Earth be able to live their daily lives more efficiently, but unfortunately technology has its flaws and when students are unable to login into their classes it can be an issue. Not everyone can afford to have laptops, video cameras, high-speed internet or printers to deal with the sudden change to distance learning.

Participant 6 expressed how their child was having issues logging into the school even though the school provided the laptop and a hot spot for their child:

I know my daughter had issues at first with the hot spot. She would lose connection with her classes and then sometimes she couldn't reconnect, and it

was just a hassle that led her to miss most of her class time (Participant 6, personal communication, February 2022).

Even though the schools are being proactive and providing laptops and hot spots to students there are still issues that can happen such as hot spots not working, parents not understanding how to use the laptop to help their children navigate through it. Some parents are lucky enough to have more powerful computers, which participant 5 expressed how school computers can easily have issues that more powerful ones will never have: My kids use their own devices, because the laptops that we have are better than what the school is issuing, and so whenever there was like a network outage because of the school district my kids never suffered from it (Participant 5, personal communication, February 2022).

### Social Interactions

With distance learning there isn't any in-person interactions and all the students have is their computer monitor in front of them. There are so many live cameras on at the same time it is almost impossible for the teacher to take notice of every student's action. Some participants have shared their concern about how their child can have a difficult time growing up since school is where they make friends, talk with their teachers, and are able to socialize:

My son is really young, and I know kids at that age really like to interact with other kids. So, I know that there's that interaction that they miss out on, and I feel my son will not want to interact with other kids sometimes

because he just never got that interaction, we all grew up with (Participant 4, personal communication, February 2022).

Participant 6 also felt that there was a loss for their child to develop their social skills and the ability to make friends on their own or play with other kids at their school:

There's really not that much socializing it's all virtual, and I get it you know we need to be safe, but a kid needs to be able to go out and play with friends and other kids and develop their socializing skills (Participant 6, personal communication, February 2022).

### Communication

Every participant shared that communication is one of the most troublesome things that has happen during the start of distance learning. They expressed that they are the ones contacting teachers for information, and that if something has changed with their child's education, they are the last person to know about it. Participant 6 shared how confusing it was to try to speak with a teacher even though there was a set time for a Zoom meeting to take place and they also spoke with teacher and at the end nothing happens:

There was a parent teacher conference where the teacher gave me a set time to be on zoom. I waited there for half an hour, they never showed up, reached out to them to let them know what happened, and they sent me a new link. They told me to be there, and I guess they forgot or something because I stayed on for another half hour and no one ever showed up, so

I guess communication with the parent and teacher more (Participant 6, personal communication, February 2022).

Participant 1 also shared how difficult it was just to get an understanding of what homework their children needed to turn in and they were having a hard time getting a response from the teacher:

When it comes to trying to reach out to teachers it can be the hardest thing I have ever done in my life. Luckily, there are some who respond quickly, but then there are the ones who take forever and I mean like weeks to respond back and as a parent I cannot do anything to get through since, the school is closed I can't call during after school hours and I have to ask my kids to tell their teachers to email me and I do not expect my kids to handle something I should be doing with the teacher.

There is just zero communication and I have brought it up to the principle's attention because I worry for my children's education (Participant 1, personal communication, February 2022).

### Patience

Patience is a concept that allows people to deal with long, difficult tasks and be able to overcome them, by simply taking the time to understand the concept or being able to wait until the right times comes for them. Parents have shared that patience seems to be a key factor when dealing with their children's distance learning and helping them overcome the struggles of distance learning.

The participants shared the following comments about how patience is important to them and their children's education:

Patience, patience, and patience is what helps me with my kids. It has helped me so much to realize that my kids still have a lot to learn, and they are relying on their dad to help them with technology they are not familiar with and sometimes I have to take a step back and breath and tell myself I have to be patient and not expect my kids to do everything on their own just yet (Participant 5, personal communication, February 2022).

The main think that has helped my family is patience. It's just making sure that we're continually loving him and, and from both parents, a lot of forgiveness because there's a lot of frustration at certain moments and we have to be patient or else we would just get into an argument, and nothing will get done if all we do is get mad and upset with us not being able to do everything the school expects us to do (Participant 4, personal communication, February 2022).

### Summary

This chapter gathered data from individual interviews. The themes that were identified were, separation of being a teacher/parent, technical issues, social interactions, communication, and patience.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

This chapter will provide the results of the data that was gathered and address the research question; how do low-income families with children in the K-12 education system and their survivability during the Covid-19 pandemic. There are major themes that were identified in this research which are separation of being a teacher/parent, technical issues, social interactions, communication, and patience. Using personal interviews in this study has helped understand the struggles families are dealing with when it comes to their children's education. Participants were also sharing their personal commented and their experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the results of this research the researcher will further explain the findings and the significance that relates to the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and the researcher sharing their understanding of what families were dealing with.

#### Discussion

As described in Chapter 1 the scope of the problem was that a one-size-fits all instructional approach does not work for all families due to their level of income and based on their social class. Based on the information on the National Center for Education Statistics (2021) report it stated that in fall 2018, students

who attended high-poverty school was at 41 percent, compared to the 20 percent of students who attended town schools. Research has shown that students who were from higher income families were performing better than those who were from lower income families (Hemphill, 2011). Regardless of what type of instructional approach school are willing to do to address issues such as the Covid-19 pandemic not all students will benefit from the same approach. There is no consideration to students and their families based off of their income, social class or level of education. The issue that needs to be addressed is that every student is different and therefore the school needs to understand that there is no such thing as a one-size-fits all instructional approach.

Described in Chapter 2, Bubb & Jones (2020) research gathered data on distance learning and how it affected families, but the school was already planning ahead and working on transferring to distance learning. The school was heavily invested in their technology to distribute to their students, which allowed for the students to prepare and have the technology that was heavily supported for distance learning. Most schools in the San Bernardino County had to immediately transfer over to distance learning, and some public schools were still not ready to conduct distance learning. Not only were some school behind on obtaining the technology necessary to conduct distance learning, but there was also a lack of training for teachers to conduct distance learning and provide the proper instructional education for the students. What made matters worse is that the time students are in school has been cut heavily, and now there is less time

for them to speak to their teachers or get the help they need since about a majority of the students are trying to get after school instructional support. With only so many teachers being able to provide after school instruction not many students are capable of obtaining any type of instructional support due to the mass of students having to attend instructional support.

When conducting the interviews individually there was comments being made by the participants who wanted to express their feelings of how schools were addressing the Covid-19 pandemic. Parents were finding it extremely difficult to communicate with the teachers via email, phone calls, and through Zoom. Most parents were not able to fully have a conversation with teachers due to some teachers not having enough time for parents or there was no communication from the teacher. Parents feel there is no interaction when it comes to a teacher and a student. They feel that their children are just sitting in front of a monitor and not gaining any type of instruction that can benefit them, and at some points parents rather conduct homeschool with their children and have already looked into what is necessary to make that happen. Parents are happy that school are providing the technology necessary to have their kids do distance learning, but sometimes the laptops and hotspots that are being distributed are not working or there are some technical issues that is just out of the families control. Children in the K-12 system have multiple instructors and with having to learn from home there are numerous distractions all around them. Having parents to tell their kids to pay attention, and to attend their classes has

already been an issue in the past, but now it has become a daily issue since teachers cannot monitor all of their students' cameras and be expected to teach it is just nearly impossible.

Hearing the participants has helped the researcher get a better understanding that their survivability is at all times every single day. They work to make a living, help their kids with their homework, and have to be a parent at all times. Some participants have given advice for other parents such as being patient with your child, making a set schedule for their children, and remembering that being a parent comes first and they cannot expect their child to be capable to act as a college student and doing things on their own. Parents would rather have their child conduct in-person class again and be able to go back to the way things were. The only parents who wish to stay with distance learning are the ones who are able to work from home due to them having the opportunity to keep their children focused on class and working on their assignments. Participants mentioned that they have their family helping them with their kids when they are away from work, and it has been a blessing for them to have. Regardless of the impact Covid-19 has made towards families they are still doing what is necessary to reach out and communicate with the school and get their children the education they deserve.

### Limitations

A limitation of this study was that the sample size was of 6 participants. The data gathered is not enough for a larger population. Another limitation of this

study was that the participants were all Hispanic. Therefore, having research based on other ethnicities can benefit the research more to have a better understanding of who else is being affected from distance learning. A third limitation when conducting interviews was finding families who still had their children enrolled in distance learning, since during the time of the research taking place schools were beginning to offer in-person classes and hybrid classes.

### Further Research

Further research will be beneficial to help have a stronger understanding of the population of San Bernardino County. There are multiple schools that are doing either distance learning, in-person, and also hybrid classes. This research only gathered information based on families who had their children enrolled in distance learning only. Understanding the difference with in-person and hybrid classes can possibly have different results as it still can relate to families dealing with their children's education during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Conclusion

This research aimed at understanding the struggles families who are low-income with children enrolled in K-12 enrolled in distance learning. Based on the existing research and the data that was collected for this research, it can benefit the educational system to better understand how to address the issues that families dealt with during the Covid-19 pandemic. With the Covid-19 pandemic still going on currently changes can be made in order to help provide better services for families and the students.

APPENDIX A  
INFORMED CONSENT

**INFORMED CONSENT**

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to explore the impact of Covid-19 on low-income families with children in the K-12 system. The study is being conducted by Antonio Leanos, MSW student, under the supervision of Dr. McAllister, Director and Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at CSUSB.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of Covid-19 on low-income families with children in the K-12 system and their survivability with distance learning.

**DESCRIPTION:** Participants will be asked to take a short survey and then, if willing, answer several questions on their survivability with distance learning via Zoom.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your responses will remain confidential and data will be reported in group form only.

**DURATION:** It will take 25 to 30 minutes to complete the survey.

**RISKS:** There is minimal to no risk based on the participants preferred way to participate in the study. Although not anticipated, there may be some discomfort in answering some of the questions. You are not required to answer and can skip the question or end your participation.

**BENEFITS:** There will not be any direct benefits to the participants. However, findings from the study will contribute to our knowledge in this area of research.

**CONTACT:** If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Barragán at (909) 537- 3501.

**RESULTS:** Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 20XX.

.....  
I agree to have this interview be audio recorded:  YES  NO

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

X \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN  
THE K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM

The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of Covid-19 on  
low-income families with children in the K-12 system.

Demographics

1. What is your gender?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Male  
 Female

2. What is your age range?

*Mark only one oval.*

- 18-35 years old  
 36-45 years old  
 46-55 years old  
 56-60 years old  
 61 years old or older

3. What is your ethnicity?

*Mark only one oval.*

- White
- African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian
- Other

4. What is your level of education? *Mark only one oval.*

- Did not complete High School
- High School Diploma
- Some College
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree or higher

5. What is your household income?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Under \$20,000
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,000
- \$40,000 - \$49,000
- \$50,000 and Over

6. How many children currently at your household are doing distance learning?

## Survey Questions

The following questions will be free response including multiple choice

7. When it comes to your child's education what has been the hardest?

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8. What do you wish schools would do differently?

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9. What kind of support system do you have at home to take care of the children?

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10. How has the school helped with your child's education?

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11. In a few words how would you describe your current situation?

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12. What challenges has your family faced with distance learning?

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13. What challenges do you face when dealing with your child's school?

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14. What has helped you overcome distance learning?

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15. What are your opinions with distance learning?

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16. Are you currently working?

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

17. How many people live in the household?

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18. Do you face any financial issues?

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

19. What do you do to be involved in your child's education?

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20. How often do you communicate with the school?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not often
- Often
- Very Often
- All The Time

21. Do you face any language barriers when it comes to communicating with the school?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

22. What support has the school provided for you and your child?

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23. Does the school contact you frequently?

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

24. Which learning style is more effective for your family?

*Mark only one oval.*

On Campus

Distance Learning

25. (Optional) Do you have any opinions or comments you wish to share?

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(Developed by Antonio Leanos)

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

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**IRB-FY2022-63 - Initial: IRB Admin./Exempt Review Determination Letter**

1 message

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**do-not-reply@cayuse.com** <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>  
To: 006905061@coyote.csusb.edu, cmcallis@csusb.edu

Mon, Nov 15, 2021 at 10:24 PM



November 15, 2021

**CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**  
Administrative/Exempt Review Determination  
Status: Determined Exempt  
IRB-FY2022-63

Carolyn McAllister Antonio Leanos  
CSBS - Social Work  
California State University, San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Carolyn McAllister Antonio Leanos:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN THE K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM" has been reviewed and determined exempt by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. An exempt determination means your study had met the federal requirements for exempt status under 45 CFR 46.104. The CSUSB IRB has weighed the risks and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants.

This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses. Investigators should consider the changing COVID-19 circumstances based on current CDC, California Department of Public Health, and campus guidance and submit appropriate protocol modifications to the IRB as needed. CSUSB campus and affiliate health screenings should be completed for all campus human research related activities. Human research activities conducted at off-campus sites should follow CDC, California Department of Public Health, and local guidance. See CSUSB's [COVID-19 Prevention Plan](#) for more information regarding campus requirements.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse IRB System with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action. The Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is due for renewal. Ensure you file your protocol renewal and continuing review form through the Cayuse IRB system to keep your protocol current and active unless you have completed your study.

- **Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.**
- **Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implemented in your study.**

- **Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.**
- **Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.**

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at [mgillesp@csusb.edu](mailto:mgillesp@csusb.edu). Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2022-63 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive from participants and/or others related to your research may be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

*Nicole Dabbs*

Nicole Dabbs, Ph.D., IRB Chair  
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

ND/MG

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