

Impacts of COVID-19 on rural Latinx families and implications for policy

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Abstract

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The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted rural communities. While school closures helped slow the spread of transmission, this has exacerbated existing learning gaps for students in rural communities. A qualitative research study was conducted to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social and academic disruptions as well as mental health of Latinx families. Four parent focus groups were conducted, and 18 semi-structured interviews with their children. Data collection took place from April to August of 2021. Five major themes emerged including 1) social disruptions, 2) family disruptions, 3) academic disruptions, 4) children's mental health, and 5) concerns about returning to onsite learning. The findings from this study can inform development of programs and public policies to mitigate the challenges experienced by rural Latinx families during the pandemic.

Impact of COVID-19 on rural Latinx families and implications for policy.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted the lives of Latinx population in Washington State. Although Latinx population in the state of Washington comprises of approximately 13% of the population, they constitute 44% of the positive COVID cases in the state.^{1,2} During the beginning of the pandemic in 2021, Yakima County became the epicenter of the pandemic with the highest rates of COVID-19 infection. The high rate was attributed to unfair labor policies (e.g., lack of paid leave policies to self-quarantine); slow response and lack of coordinated efforts around emergency preparedness at the local, state, and federal levels; inadequate distribution of personal protective equipment; insufficient access to testing for COVID-19 and timely return of results; all of these have compounded the community's ability to practice preventive measures.³ While drastic public health measures such as social distancing and community containment with school closures helped reduce the spread of the COVID-19 infection, it also impacted the education and social-emotional development of children and families, particularly in underserved communities.⁴

Schools have been identified not only as a setting for educational instructions, but also a safe environment where it supports development of a child's social and emotional skills, provides physical speech and mental health therapy, and fulfills nutrition needs.⁵ The lack of access to onsite learning during the pandemic have been reported as disproportionately affecting children in underserved rural or low-income neighborhoods and household and racial/ethnic minority families. Many of these children do not have reliable internet connectivity and equipment, lack family members who can be present to assist with virtual learning, and heavily rely on key resources and services like school food programs, therapy, and after school programs to meet

basic developmental needs.⁶ For Latinx children in rural communities, the lack of in-person learning opportunities has widened the achievement gap and exacerbate physical and mental disparities that existed prior to the pandemic.⁷

However, the extent of the impact of school closure on educational and social disruptions and mental health of Latinx families and their children have been less documented. Understanding these challenges can help inform the development of interventions and create community-needs driven policies to better prepare and support Latinx families in future emergencies. The purpose of this thesis was to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the mental health and educational experience of school children in the Lower Yakima Valley of Washington State.

Methods

Design

This is a qualitative study with four focus groups with a total of 26 parents and 18 semi-structured interviews with their children to understand (1) how COVID-19 impacted students mental health and (2) how their educational experience changed during the COVID-19 stay at home mandates. This study was initially approved by the University of Washington IRB, FWA #00006878 on April, 22nd of 2021.

Population and Setting

The participants are from the Lower Yakima Valley of Eastern Washington State. In Washington State, much of the Hispanic population is concentrated in Yakima County. According to the 2011 census, the Lower Valley has a total population of about 100,000 people; roughly 65% are of Hispanic origin. Most of the Hispanic population in the Valley is Mexican American (95%).⁸

Recruitment

Parent focus group recruitment:

Parents who have participated in the Together We STRIDE study ⁹ and had agreed for future contact were sent an invitation letter explaining the study. Together We STRIDE was a quasi-experimental study aimed to examine the effectiveness of a multi-level nutrition and physical activity intervention among students in five elementary schools in the Lower Yakima Valley.

The study team sent an opt-out information letter to the parents via mail providing information about the study and letting them know about a follow-up call by the study team. Parents who did not want to be contacted could call the study team to opt out of the study. Bicultural and bilingual community health workers (CHWs) called the participants by phone after the initial recruitment mail. If parents did not pick up the phone, a message was left with contact information of the study team.

Once 10 parents were enrolled, the CHW found a date & time and scheduled a focus group (in English or in Spanish). This process continued until two focus groups in Spanish and English had been scheduled for a total of 26 participants across the 4 focus groups. All four focus groups had 5-8 participants in each focus group.

Children's interviews recruitment

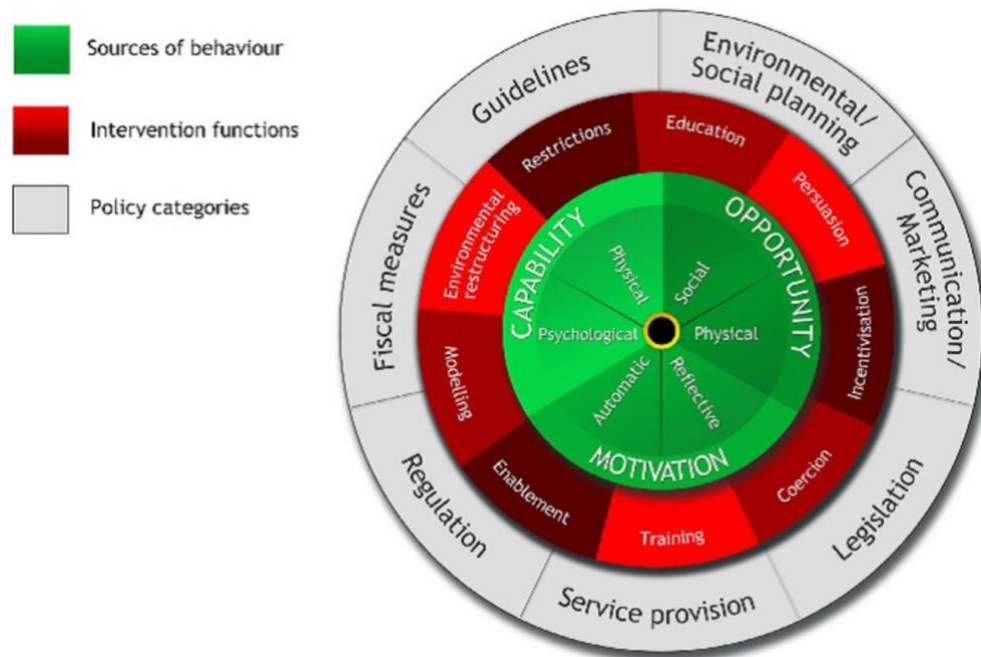
Once parents agreed to participate in the focus groups, CHWs elicited parents' interest to enroll their children to participate in a separate semi-structured interview. CHWs followed up with parents after the focus group to schedule a call for the semi-structured interviews with the children.

Parent's Focus Group Moderator Guide and Children's Interview Guide

The development of the parent focus group and the children’s interview guide were informed by the two theoretical frameworks: Theoretical domains framework (TDF) and the Socio-Context framework. (Table 1)

TDF is a widely used framework that integrates a plethora of behavior change theories at multiple levels of the society to capture complex behaviors. TDF framework covers domains that include “Environmental Context and Resources”, “Beliefs about consequences” and “Social Influence”.¹⁰⁻¹¹ TDF frameworks have high validity for assessing barrier changes, with an estimated 96.8% accuracy.¹⁰⁻¹¹ Social Context Framework uses contextual domains of (social, cultural, and religious) factors to help shape day to day experiences that can indirectly and directly affect the health behavior.¹²⁻¹³

Figure 1: Theoretical Domains Framework for Health Behavior Change.



Adapted From: 11.) Richardson M, Khouja CL, Sutcliffe K, *et al* Using the theoretical domains framework and the behavioral change wheel in an overarching synthesis of systematic reviews *BMJ Open* 2019;**9**:e024950. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2018-024950

Table 1: Questions from the study using the Socio-Context Framework and Theoretical Domains Framework.

Social-Context Framework	Domains	Examples of Questions
	Social Context	Can you tell us how family/friends may be helpful/not helpful when deciding whether to get your child tested regularly for COVID-19? How about when needing to get your child vaccinated?
	Cultural Context	Can you tell us about any beliefs in your community that can make it easy/ difficult for children to get tested for COVID-19? How about to get vaccinated for COVID-19? [PROBE: historical events, trauma, cultural beliefs]
	Religious Context	Can you tell us about religious beliefs in your community and the role that these play in people’s decisions to get their children regularly tested for COVID-19? How about for vaccination?
Theoretical Domains Framework	Sources of Behavior	
	Social	How has COVID-19 affected your relationship with your family?
	Physical	How has COVID-19 affected your physical activities?
	Psychological	How has social distancing and community containment affected your family’s mental and physical well-being? What about your children’s?

	Reflective	How engaged do you feel during virtual learning? And how much do you think you are learning from virtual learning?

Note: The social context domains are from Sarmast et al.¹⁰ and Pasick et al.¹² and Theoretical Domains framework.

Data Collection

Data were collected from April 2021–August 2021. Parent focus groups lasted about between 41 minutes to 123 minutes. Parents received a gift card for the amount of \$25 for participating in the focus group.

Children Interviews were all conducted in English. The interviews lasted between 12 minutes to 20 minutes. Children received a gift card for the amount of \$15 for participating in the semi-structured interview.

Data Analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded and sent to a third party for transcriptions. Three coders created a tentative codebook. All coders were experienced in qualitative analysis through formal coursework and using the skills on numerous studies. The qualitative analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana’s approach.¹⁴ Codebook was created using the moderator guide and the semi-structured interview guide. The codebook was used to conduct deductive coding, adding, deleting and revising the codes inductively. Frequent comparisons were made to ensure new codes were reviewed against all transcripts. After transcripts were coded, coders compared the themes and pattern arising from the data and determined possible linkages across participants and thematic categories. Weekly meetings were established to discuss discrepancies and reconcile differences between the coders and optimize the codebook during the discussion.

The data from the semi-structured interviews served to triangulate and validate the findings from the focus groups.

Results

Parents' mean age was 43 years (Standard Deviation of 5.68 for English speaking and 7.10 for Spanish Speaking Participants), 25 were female, and 22 identified as Latinos. Children's mean age was 13 years (Standard Deviation of 1.03), 10 were female, and 18 identified as Latinos (**Appendix F and G**).

Five major themes emerged including 1) social disruptions, 2) family disruptions, 3) academic disruptions, 4) children's mental health, and 5) concerns about returning to onsite learning. The results section describes each theme in the order described above.

Theme 1: Social Disruptions

Parents expressed concerns about financial stability, employment security and their children's social isolation during the pandemic. Parents mentioned that many agricultural workers stopped working during the pandemic impacting their finances. For those who were able to work, their workload did not make the ends meet. Pre-pandemic, farmworkers were allowed to work overtime as their work is seasonal and are dependent on these extra revenues during off seasons. This, however, was not available during the pandemic causing a reduction in their paychecks to support their families. Parents also mentioned hearing about people who had COVID-19 being laid off from work and had difficulties paying rent. This led some parents feeling hesitant about getting tested for COVID-19, as they feared losing their jobs if the results were positive. One parent eloquently captured the impact of COVID on employment and ultimately people's finances.

“And they would lay off people who worked with him, who had COVID, so he didn’t want that because they weren’t going to help him out. They weren’t going to pay for his rent, they weren’t going to do anything.” FG2 P2

Parents expressed concerns of seeing their children confined to their homes all the time. They mentioned that this was difficult because children did not have the depth of understanding of the challenges introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic and created additional stress on their part.

“I think for the children it bugs them more, because they're used to being outside, playing with the neighbors or going with us to stores. And so they can get, you know, not be in the house, cooped up all the time. And now with this pandemic we can't even take them to stores....And it's another stress on them. Sometimes they don't understand why they have to stay home or the dangers – what could happen if we take them.” FG1P5

Another parent corroborated this sentiment and while her child did well academically during virtual learning, the lack of social interaction with friends affected his mental health even if he had other siblings at home. She emphasized the needs for socialization with similar age and gender.

“I wanted to say that...he [referring to her kid] was doing better with the online version of schooling but because of the lack of interaction with the socializing with other students it became a struggle for our family with mental health because we are a family of a household with lots of children and we age, our age group ranges. But he is an only boy so it was difficult for him with no interaction with boys his age, anybody for him to socialize with or anything except for technology.” FG4 P3

Children corroborated the findings from the parent focus groups and mentioned that the pandemic made it difficult to see friends due to the fear of getting COVID-19. They also discussed having increased screen time, playing more video games, as due to lack of opportunities to participate in organized sports activity, and this negatively impacted their emotions, leading to more stress or boredom. One student expressed his frustration of not being able to spend time with friends

“A lot, like I can't hang out with my friends as much, and it's kind of annoying that I sometimes want to see my friends, but I can't because of COVID.” CH2108

Another student shared similar sentiment emphasizing the lack of opportunities to engage in sports with friends.

“Not being as active as much, like usually going out with friends, playing some football, some stuff like that, not really being as active... .. Yeah, mainly not being able to go to – usually, if there were scheduled games, sometimes you wouldn't be able to go because there were restrictions, so you can't really go anymore.” CH2091

Theme 2: Family Disruptions

Parents disclosed not being able to hang out with their families. In Latinx Culture, the concept of familism is deeply embedded.¹⁵ Being quarantine no longer allowed families to gather for social events. This was particularly difficult for the elders as they were not able to connect with their family members. Family members, on their part, expressed sadness of for not being able to continue the tradition that kept them together. One participant expressed the impact of social isolation on her mother and what it meant to not connect with her grandchildren.

“Definitely at the beginning – I come from a family that's very united and from my husband's side as well as my side of the family. This definitely put a barrier in our gatherings and having barbecues and family events. It definitely put a lot of isolation and restraint with the grandparents, my kids seeing their grandparents. Definitely that put some isolation. And definitely I didn't want to put them in a situation where my mother was being exposed so having that, that definitely made a very sad impact. Because not only was my mother isolated, same with my mother in law. She wasn't able to have the unity of having her grandkids come over. “FG4 P5

Another participant shared similar sentiment on how social isolation provided protection to her elder relatives, but at the same time affected their emotional well-being.

“It affected my family –so I have a very close knit family, and I'm not just talking about my kids and I. I'm talking about aunts, uncles, cousins, my grandma especially. So when

this all happened it was really hard because as family we decided to stay away from my grandma to keep her safe. Most of us were working, you know, had to continue, and she's an elder, so keeping her safe was always our goal. At the same time it was so hard for her, 'cause it hit her – mentally it hit her so far. At a point I think we almost felt like it was damaging her – us staying away was hurting her more than maybe even – I don't know, it just – it was a really hard time.” FG 1 P1

Children shared similar sentiment of wanting to protect their grandparents, and their fear to go outside because they might get COVID-19 and pass it on to their grandparents.

“...I feel like it's still worrisome because I have a grandpa and he's getting old and I don't want him getting sick and risk his life...” CH2327

Children also discussed how staying home all the time increased the stress levels of family members, creating tension among siblings and parents affecting the family dynamics.

“Honestly, we've been getting in a lot of fights and it's like affecting my sister and her kids against me and my middle sister and my parents.” CH3106

Theme 3: Education disruption

Children mentioned about the difficulties of engaging in virtual learning as they needed to support other siblings with their virtual learning as well as the broadband issue.

Interviewee: "Like getting distracted at home." Interviewer: What were some of those I guess distractions or things that kept you from learning? If you don't mind sharing? "Probably having to take care of my brother while learning." CH2344

“Yeah because we're a pretty big family and so it would go pretty slow sometimes because all of us were using our phones and devices and everything on the same Wi-Fi. And then like I would forget to charge my Chromebook and I'd have to charge it. I'd be late to class and I'd have to charge it during class. And then also not being able to find papers or pens at times.” CH3119

Theme 4: Children's Mental Health

When discussing about mental health in the community, parents discussed about mental health of their children rather than their own. Parents across focus groups mentioned that social isolation affected their children's personality, their social skills, and increased anxiety towards social situation that they did not have prior to the pandemic.

“For my kids mental health, they definitely developed some anxieties going out where they did not have that and a little bit of some social awkwardness where before they were like social butterflies. But then now through COVID just being home and with us they're a little bit more nervous about like hanging out, what to talk about, those kinds of things because they don't have the same type of life that they had before COVID.” FG 4 P7

Children interviews corroborated the change in personality from a “positive person” to a “negative person,” but also highlighted a more complex layers of mental health, feeling “lonely,” “bad” and “trapped.” Some children mentioned how the lack of motivation they felt because of isolation was a challenge for virtual learning. One student described their lack of motivation to do “anything” during the pandemic.

“So I kind of felt like kind of crap, like I couldn't do anything. And then I just kind of felt like not really doing anything at one point. Not really motivated to do anything at all, just stay to myself, kind of isolated a little bit.” CH2327

Parents mentioned that they tried to limit conversations about COVID-19 to avoid creating trauma due to the force of the pandemic. When conversation occurred, they revolved around easing their children's stress to keeping them hopeful.

“...More due to the fear of listening to people. I tried not to talk about it as much as possible because they would get traumatized. The more we would talk about it, the more traumatized they would get. I would tell them that everything will be alright, its ok, this will pass— Try to put them at ease because it was getting out of hand. They were biting their nails. “What if we get it?”, “What if we die?” I would tell that it's all ok. They were scared out of their minds, but we tried to have them see that everything was all right.” FG2 P3

Children, on their end, received fear-based messages through multiple media outlets such as TikTok.

“Yeah. But I think when I saw it they were just like making fun of the people that were doing that. But they’re like it turns you into zombies and stuff...on like TikTok and stuff.” CH2636

Theme 5: Concerns about Returning to Onsite Learning

Parents did not express concern for their children returning to the classroom and in-person learning. For one parent, they didn’t feel any sort of concern because they thought that their child “Can’t get COVID.” One participant expressed this sentiment.

“ Oh, I just – I don't think that – I think they're – I keep them really safe. Like they don't go anywhere but to school and home. I sort of believe that kids can't get it 'cause they never got it. I'm not that concerned.” FG1 P4

Children corroborated this sentiment. While a few children expressed concerns about returning to school safely, they wanted to return to the classroom sooner as they felt that they learned better in person than virtually. Most children mentioned not feeling concerns of returning to the classroom since most of them already wore mask and followed necessary preventative behaviors like wearing hand sanitizer and washing their hands frequently.

Interviewer: “ How was that experience of returning to school and keeping COVID in mind? “ Interviewer: “Well, for me, it was kind of like the same as going back to normal school, but just with the masks and stuff, it made it kind of more, like, hard and stuff, I guess.” CH2096

“Well, right now I kind of prefer going in person. I am fully vaccinated and I do wear my mask and I do stay safe when it comes to in school. And when you're in school it's just like better to be able to like see friends and communicate with your teachers better.” CH2327

Discussion

This study examined the impact of COVID-19 on social disruptions, academic disruptions and mental health experienced by Latinx youth and their families during the pandemic using a qualitative study. Five major themes emerged including 1) social disruptions, 2) family disruptions, 3) academic disruptions, 4) children's mental health, and 5) concerns about returning to onsite learning.

Both parents and children discussed about major social, family, and academic disruptions experienced due to the pandemic, the impact of those disruptions on mental health, and how they were able to address some of those disruptions. When discussing about mental health, parents were more willing to discuss about the mental health experiences of their children rather than their own. These findings are in agreement with a report from Latino Center for Health where Latinx families tend to underreport their own mental health status as they continue to keep positive aspiration in life in the face of adversity.¹⁶ Parents and most children did not express concerns for returning to school for onsite learning feeling that the vaccination and previous COVID-19 exposures boosted their immune system against COVID-19.

Implications for Policy Change

1.) Stakeholders such as (Schools and Health Districts) can be better prepared by having a set plan or guidelines in place in case of a future pandemic.

- Have funds set aside for emergency preparedness. One example is having funds set aside for access to internet and computers for students who live in remote areas who may not have access to remote learning.¹⁷

- Have a community board and trusted champion voted into place at the school district and community level. In the case of an emergency the team is already put together and ready to act on any emergency.
- Come together with the community and plan safe outdoor activities for children and parents to enjoy! Having green spaces in a community significantly helps with positive well-being and mental health.¹⁸

2.) Continue to advocate for equitable policy at the local, state, and national level for the Latinx Community

- As social justice advocates, we can make a change to the policy at an upstream level. Communities and individuals can get involved during the Legislative Education Days which happen in February of each year and an opportunity to connect with your local representatives.¹⁹

3.) Work with the community and other community-based organizations to apply for funding for mental health resources.

- It is prevalent that there are not enough resources for our Latinx communities, particularly in the sector of mental health. Continue to raise awareness for mental health within your families and the community.
- Increasing funding for mental health resources is needed in the community to see changes in health behaviors of students. By allocating funds to have a mental health professional located at each of the schools, could positively impact the usage of mental health resources in the Latinx communities. It has been proven from time to time that when a resource is relatively available there will be more consumers of that service. Project Aware launched in 2020 and aimed to bring

more accessibility to mental health counseling. This program could serve as a model when applying for future funding.²⁰

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the Latinx Communities in the Yakima Valley. Social, family, and academic disruptions as well as children's mental health were noted as consequences of the pandemic. These findings can help inform future interventions and public policies at the local, state, and national level to mitigate the negative effects and better prepare for future pandemics.

Positionality

As an individual from this community, it is important to understand my positionality and recognize that I bring a lived experience lens that many other researchers might not have. This can be both a strength and limitation when looking at the impacts of COVID-19 in our communities. However, I fully disclose that I tried to limit my personal bias when analyzing the information and state that this is only my perspective of the data analysis coming from a Latinx male of privilege. There is still need a lot of work to be done in our communities to reach the health equity we deserve. We must continue to push for better policy in the Latinx communities of rural areas.

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Dedications

“Este trabajo se lo dedico a mis padres, sin la sabiduría y el esfuerzo de ustedes nada de esto fuera posible. Todo su esfuerzo al cruzar miles de millas y dejar atrás sus familias por fin valió la pena. Ustedes sembraron la semilla y por fin se retoño. Al mismo tiempo le dedico este trabajo a mi futura esposa y mis hermanos que sin su infinito apoyo nada de esto fuera posible. ¡Los quiero mucha familia!” -Luis

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Appendices

Appendix A: Parent Focus Group Guide for Moderator

WELCOME PARTICIPANTS AS THEY ENTER THE REMOTE ROOM.

Hello, my name is _____, I am a [POSITION] from [NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION]. We are talking to you today because we want to understand your thoughts and experiences with COVID-19 testing and specifically testing children. The thoughts and suggestions shared in this group -- and in three other groups that will also be meeting -- will help the investigators understand parents' concerns about children returning to school and identify resources to address them.

REVIEW WRITTEN CONSENT FORM AND RECEIVE AUDIO/VISUAL CONSENT. THANK ANYONE WHO DECIDES NOT TO PARTICIPATE.

This discussion will be audio recorded. We try to take notes, but they are not always complete. Please feel free to share your ideas and opinions even if they are different from others. All views and ideas are important. We would like to get as many different points of view as we can. Since this is a group discussion you do not have to wait for me to call on you to speak, but please try to speak one at a time. If everyone starts talking at once, I may ask you to stop so that we can hear everyone on the audio recorder. Please remember that all your answers are confidential, so please do not share with others outside of the group.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

To begin, let's go around the (virtual room) and have each of you tell us your first name, and if you like, why you are here. I'll start

From now on, we will refer to each of us with the letter P meaning participants. I will assign numbers for the letter P. For example, P1, P2, P3...etc. So, let's take a moment to change our name in the zoom video with your number and refer to the other person with this code. OK – Let's get started then.

- START THE VIRTUAL RECORDER –

1.) GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL REOPENING

I am going to start with some general questions about school reopening.

- a. What are your thoughts about virtual learning vs in-person learning? [**PROBE:** benefits and challenges]
- a. How was your child's participation with virtual learning during the pandemic?
- a. What was the biggest challenge (if any) for your child to stay engaged in virtual learning? [**PROBE:** slow internet connectivity, lack of motivation, accessing school materials online, unable to connect with friends in-person]
- a. Is your school offering in-person learning?
 - a. If yes, what learning modality did you decide for your child?
 - i.If attending in-person, how do you think attending in-person learning changed your child and your family's daily lifestyle?
 - i.If attending virtually, what was the reason to continue virtual learning?
 - a. If no, what is your preference on learning modality (in-person vs virtual) and why?

2.) COVID-19 TESTING AND RETURNING TO SCHOOLS

Now, I am going to ask you some questions about COVID-19 testing for children. COVID-19 testing nose swabs significantly progressed since last year, and now the latest technology includes a swab in the front of the nose [EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TECHNOLOGY]. Some have described this new advanced swabbing as similar to picking one's nose.

- a. What concerns do you have about your child[ren] returning to school?
- a. How would you feel about your child participating in weekly COVID-19 testing using this new technology to regularly evaluate whether your child has COVID-19 while in school?
- a. What would motivate you to have your child to participate in a regular testing program?
- a. What needs do you have for your child[ren] to return to school? What resources could meet those needs?
- a. How comfortable is your child in following preventive measures in place in school? [**PROBE:** mask wearing, social distancing, wellness check, hand sanitizers]
- a. What other preventive measures would you like to see implemented in school to keep children safe while in school?
- a. How concerned are you that your child(ren) may contract COVID-19?
- a. Do you have resources to quarantine your child, should this be needed? Can you tell me what those are?

3.) COVID-19 VACCINE FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN

Now, I am going to ask you some questions about COVID-19 vaccines.

- a. What would motivate people to get vaccinated for COVID-19?
- a. What concerns and fears have you heard in the community about the COVID-19 vaccines?
- a. If vaccines were available for children, how open would you be to vaccinating your child(ren)?
- a. What concerns and needs would prevent you from vaccinating your child(ren)?
- a. What resources would help you address those needs?

2.) SOCIAL-CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Now, I am going to ask you some questions about aspects of our lives that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- a. Can you tell us how family/friends may be helpful/not helpful when deciding whether to get your child tested regularly for COVID-19? How about when needing to get your child vaccinated?
- a. Can you tell us about any beliefs in your community that can make it easy/ difficult for children to get tested for COVID-19? How about to get vaccinated for COVID-19? [**PROBE:** historical events, trauma, cultural beliefs]
- a. Can you tell us about religious beliefs in your community and the role that these play in people's decisions to get their children regularly tested for COVID-19? How about for vaccination?

- a. Can you tell us about any experiences in your community where people's financial situation became a barrier for getting tested for COVID-19? [**PROBE:** missing work to get tested, inability to quarantine because of lack of paid benefits].

4.) CONSEQUENCES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

I am in our last section. Now I want to ask you some questions about experiences with social distancing and community containment.

- a. How has COVID-19 affected your family's dynamics (adult to adult, and adult to children)?
- a. How has COVID-19 affected your family's ability to get food, your finances, and your ability to secure housing?
- a. How has social distancing and community containment affected your family's mental and physical well-being? What about your children's?

5.) CLOSING STATEMENT

That completes the conversation for today. Does anyone have any other questions, comments, or final thoughts they would like to share? Thank you again for your participation.

If anyone thinks of other questions or concerns, you can call the project number at [PHONE NUMBER]. Before we end the session, I have a few administrative/business details to share with you.

6.) ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

PROVIDE INFORMATION ON GIFT CARDS.
ANY OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

RECORDER PROTOCOL

- **TEST ZOOM RECORDER BEFORE THE FOCUS GROUP AND START RECORDING**

Appendix B: Semi Structured Interview Guide for Children Interviews

1.) GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL REOPENING

I am going to start with some general questions about returning to school

- a. What are your thoughts about virtual learning vs in-person learning? [**PROBE:** pros and cons]
- b. How engaged do you feel during virtual learning? And how much do you think you are learning from virtual learning?
- c. What was/is the biggest challenge (if any) for you with virtual learning? [**PROBE:** slow internet connection, lack of motivation, getting school resources online, not being able to connect with friends in-person.]
- d. Is your school offering in-person learning?
 - a. If yes, what learning method are you using now?

- i. If attending in-person, how do you think attending in-person changed your daily life and that of your family?
- ii. If attending virtually, what motivated your family to continue virtual learning?
- b. If no, what is your preference on learning method (in-person vs virtual) and why?

2.) COVID-19 TESTING AND RETURNING TO SCHOOLS

Now, I am going to ask you some questions about COVID-19 testing for kids. COVID-19 testing nose swabs look very different from last year, and now the latest technology includes a swab in the front of the nose (different from the long stick used for the back of the nose). Some have described this new way of swabbing as similar to picking one's nose.

- a. How would you feel about participating in weekly COVID-19 testing using this new way of swabbing regularly to check whether you have COVID-19 while in school? [PROBE: who should swab? Where to swab?]
- b. What would motivate you to participate in a regular testing program?
- c. What are some things that you wish you had to help you with returning to school? [PROBE: mask, hand sanitizer, transportation, more friends]
- d. How comfortable are you with following preventive measures in place in school? [PROBE: mask wearing, social distancing, wellness check, and hand sanitizers]
- e. How worried are you that you may get COVID-19 when returning to school?

3.) COVID-19 VACCINE FOR CHILDREN

Now, I am going to ask you some questions about COVID-19 vaccines for children.

- a. What do you know about vaccines for COVID-19?
- b. If there are vaccines for kids, would you be able to ask your parents for it?
- c. What worries do you have about COVID-19 vaccines?

4.) CONSEQUENCES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This will be our last section. Now I want to ask you some questions about experiences with social distancing and being isolated at home.

- a. How has COVID-19 affected your relationship with your family?
- c. How has COVID-19 affected your physical activities?
- c. How has COVID-19 affected your feelings and emotions?

****END OF INTERVIEW GUIDE****

Codes	Code	Description
1.0	Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	Discussions that encompasses social disruptions, family disruptions and health experienced by the community
		Discussions around how COVID-19 pandemic disrupted employment, financial security, food insecurity, and housing. Discussions around how COVID-19 disrupted social and athletic events. Discussions around the community's ups and downs, and personal narratives related to how COVID affected activities. Include general concerns about COVID-29.
1.1	Social disruptions	
1.2	Family disruptions	Discussions around how the pandemic affected the family relationships (adults to adults, children to children, adult to children)
1.3	General mental health	Discussions around the impact of COVID-19 on mental health including adults and children
1.3.1	Parents mental health	Discussions around mental health in parents due to the pandemic
1.3.2	Children's mental health	Discussions around mental health in children due to the pandemic. (lack of motivation, anxiety, depression, talk about their emotions)
1.4	Concerns about children's safety	ONLY FOR FG AND CHILD INTERVIEWS General safety concerns about safety (when related to going back to school, use 3.2 concerns and needs for in person learning)
2.0	School opening	Discussions around experiences and challenges with virtual and on-site learning and readiness of schools for full reopenings
2.1	Perceptions of virtual and on-site learning	Discussions around experiences and challenges with virtual and on-site learning (i.e.
2.2	Readiness for school reopening	Discussions around readiness of schools for full or partial re-openings, whether schools already re-opened or are preparing to.
		Discussions around readiness of parents and children of school re-opening. Discussions about personal Adherence /Perceptions to protective measures (i.e. mask wearing, wash hand, social distance, cleaning areas using sanitizer, mimic-learning). Also includes feelings/attitudes towards going back to school. Double code with 3.4 when talking specifically about preventive measures in school.
2.3	Parents/Children's readiness of school reopening	
3.0	Testing and school reopening	Discussions around the utility of the testing as a tool to reopen schools, concerns and needs for in-person learning, other concerns specific for children, and resources to quarantine
3.1	Motivation to participate in regular testing	Discussions around people motivations to participate in regular testing
		Discussions around concerns (or lack of) and needs for in-person learning, including resources to meet those concerns. Discussions Concerns about Covid-related to issues (i.e. passing virus from school to home, Lack of extra space for quarantines, Privacy issue for a positive case)
3.2	Concerns and needs for in-person learning	
3.3	Testing concerns	Discussion around concerns for testing itself and testing program in school (i.e. testing process, testing orga
3.4	Perception of the preventive measures in schools	Discussions around current preventive measures in place in schools and ways to improve it. Note: when they are talking specifically about testing, use 3.3 code
3.5	Resources to quarantine	Double code with 2.3 when talking about adherence to preventive measures Discussions around resource needs in the community to support quarantine
4.0	COVID-19 vaccines	Discussions around concerns about COVID-19 vaccines, motivators of vaccine uptake, perceptions of vaccines for children, and discussions around resource needs to address vaccine uptake concerns
4.1	Concerns about covid-19 vaccines	Discussions around concerns about COVID-19 vaccine, includes trust in the vaccines
		Discussions around motivators or barriers for vaccine uptake.
4.2	Motivation for vaccine uptake	
4.3	Perceptions about vaccines for children	Discussions around perceptions of vaccines for children includes readiness to vaccinate children and concerns of covid-19 for children
4.4	Resources to address vaccine concerns	Discussions around resource needs to address vaccine uptake concerns
5.0	Social Contextual Factors	Discussions around how social contextual factors impact decisions around testing and vaccine uptake including social factors, cultural and historical factors, religious factors, and financial factors
5.1	Social factors related to friends and family	Discussions around how families, friends and community could impact decisions around testing and vaccine uptake
5.2	Social factors related to politics and social media	Discussions around how politics/government and social media could impact decisions around testing and v
5.3	Cultural, religious and historical factors	Discussions around how historical events, trauma, cultural beliefs, and religious factors could impact decisi
5.4	Financial factors	Discussions around how financial factors could impact decisions around testing and vaccine uptake
6	Experiences with e-learning	ONLY FOR FG AND CHILD INTERVIEWS
6.1	Concerns about children's general development	Discussions around children's general development influenced by e-learning (i.e. learning curve and socialization)
6.2	Children's physical health	Discussion around children's physical health influenced by e-learning
6.3	School resources non COVID related	Describes resources or lack of resources for children's learning or mental health.

Appendix D: Code 1.0 Usage Across Focus Groups and Children Interviews

Code	Name	Amount Quoted		
1.0	Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic	Prevalence in Focus Groups	Prevalence in Children Interview	Total Excerpts
1.1	Social Disruptions	28 (56%)	22 (44%)	50
1.2	Family Disruptions	11 (47.8%)	12 (52.2%)	23
1.3	General Mental Health	49 (43.7%)	63 (56.3%)	112
1.3.1	Parents Mental Health	6 (66.7%)	3 (33.3%)	9
1.3.2	Children’s Mental Health	26 (31.3%)	57 (68.7%)	83
1.4	Concerns about Children’s Safety	4 (36.4%)	7 (63.6%)	11
Total Excerpts		124	164	288

Appendix E: Demographic Table of Focus Group Participants

Demographics of Focus Group Participants		Interview Language	
Variable	Overall N=26	English	Spanish
Gender: Female	25	12	13
Age (Years)	43.5	40	46
SD for Age		5.68	7.10
Hispanic/Latino Origin	22	9	13
Race or Ethnicity			
Hispanic	23	9	14
Native American	2	2	0
White	1	1	0

Appendix F: Demographic Table of Children Participating in Interviews

Demographics of Children Participants		Interview Language	
Variable	Overall N=18	English	Spanish
Gender			
Male	8	8	0
Female	10	10	0
Age (Mean)	13	13	0
SD for Age	1.03		
Are you Hispanic/Latino Origin	18	18	0
Race /Ethnicity			
Hispanic or Latino	3	3	0
Missing Value	15	15	0