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**Our Stories, Our Voices: The Lived Experiences of Black Families with Young
Children During Covid-19**

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the School of Education

University of San Francisco

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement of the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS EDUCATION

in

ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

By

Devalin E. W. Jackson

December 18, 2020

OUR STORIES, OUR VOICES

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Under the guidance and approval of the committee and approved by all its members, this thesis has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.



(Instructor)



(Faculty Advisor)

18 December 2020

(Date)

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Black Families; thank you for being you. For choosing love and light in this crazy time of darkness. I hope this work uplifts you and inspires others to learn, embrace and bring your brilliance into all spaces. Black Mamas you are Queens and I love you!

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black families raising young children during shelter in place orders and distance learning due to Covid-19. The study was conducted virtually through Zoom and Google form due to county shelter in place orders. Participants were recruited from the school in which the researcher worked. Through the use of virtual interviews, the five participants highlighted themes of reconnections, isolations, empowerment, family values and conversations. The families shared experiences of resilience and hope and brought thoughts of how these experiences could be highlighted in instructional and curriculum designs; especially during distance learning.

Keywords: Black Families, distance learning, shelter in place, covid-19, experiences

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Institutional Review Board (IRB) cover letter

Appendix B: Advertisement for Recruitment

Advertisement for Recruitment

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Chapter One: Introduction

Right now, the whole world is talking about COVID-19: mask or no mask, airborne or droplet transmission, shelter in place or socially distancing. At the same time the United States of America experienced a summer of nationwide demonstrations surrounding racial inequities and how those inequities are woven into the fabric of every institution in the country. The mix of those two things have led to a very turbulent past nine months. It has caused all stakeholders to re-examine, re-define, and revamp how and why things are done. Once COVID-19 made the progression from outbreak to pandemic, schools closed overnight. According to UNESCO, three-fourths of school children, worldwide, were halted from the traditional classroom setting (UNESCO, 2020). In the United States of America this move led to public schools around the country moving to distance learning. Families became teachers and teachers became learning coaches (Currie-Rubin & Smith, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US, each state, county and school have been tasked with finding ways to teach students. From remote to hybrid to face to face school systems in partnership with Department of Public Health had to determine the most effective route. When cities with big school districts like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland decided to go to remote/distance learning, these school systems spent the first weeks of distance learning making sure families had devices and connectivity to be able to participate in distance learning. For example, according to the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) website, SFUSD distributed 5,200

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devices to students in grade 3-12 and Pre-k- 2grade students were provided with distance learning packets (via pick up or mail out) to support distance learning during county shelter in place orders (SFUSD, 2020).

While districts like SFUSD were credited in supporting families swiftly and effectively, anecdotal evidence suggests that Black students and their families were not participating in distance learning as much as their white counterparts (Goldstein, Popescu, & Hannah-Jones, 2020). According to Parkes et al. (2015), distance learning exacerbates the racial and social inequities that public education institutions perpetuate. In my own experience as a public-school educator during Covid-19 shelter in place orders, I saw that some Black families who were engaged in the school pre-COVID-19 became somewhat disengaged from school during distance learning. Other Black families, who had limited engagement with their children's schools pre-COVID-19, cut all communication with schools. This is not to say that learning for Black students and Black families did not happen, but the institution of public education was no longer serving the needs of Black Families during distance learning.

In order to understand both why Black families are disengaging from school during COVID-19, and how to remedy this, it is important to understand the multiple layers that are in effect; (a) students benefit from culturally responsive instructional design when in distance learning; (b) Black students have higher rates of academic achievement when their families have authentic connections with schools and community partnerships; (c) student school engagement during distance learning is affected by factors such as family work schedules, financial obligations, and the capacity of the parent to serve as a teacher.

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Related to this, research demonstrates that Black students whose families have authentic connections with schools and community partnerships have higher rates of academic achievement (Cousins & Mickelson, 2011). In traditional school settings, Black parents often feel isolated and turn to community resources for educational support and guidance (Louque & Latunde, 2016). During distance learning feelings of isolation can be exacerbated and with county and state shelter in place orders, community resources may also be limited causing negative effects on Black families and students during distance learning. Student engagement is directly affected by this isolation and by other external factors such as family work schedules, financial obligations, and the capacity of the parent to serve as a teacher (Curie-Rubin & Smith, 2014). As external factors are amplified due to the pandemic and social unrest, the ability of many Black families to support their children during distance learning may become compromised; this in turn may negatively affect student engagement during distance learning (White, 2020). For these reasons, during times of crisis-based distance learning, Black families may benefit from culturally responsive instructional designs, and partnerships with schools and community organizations that foster relationships and student engagement. However, these specific tools do not yet exist.

Background and Need

Historically, Black students and their families have been marginalized and silenced in the U.S. education system from its inception. The first public school was established in 1635 and it was not until around 1863 when the first legal schools for freed blacks began to arise (National Geographic. 2020, April,6). This means that for more than 200 years that if Black children and their families wanted to educate their children they were breaking the law. The United States of America's school system did not

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consider nor include Black Families in conversations about schooling, primarily because they were not seen as people but as property. In spite of this, we now know that Black families, communities and Black spaces found ways to still educate themselves in silence and the dark of night.

The role of race and racial biases in education forced Black families to navigate between two systems or two worlds to find success (Dubois, 1903). These two worlds are the world of being an American and the world of being Black. Dubois writing stated:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife- this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He wouldn't bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face. (Dubois, 1903, p. 2-3)

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For many Black Families, this thought means knowing how to navigate between those two systems and when not done effectively could lead to isolation in the U.S. education system.

There is a common saying, that “When the world catches a cold, Black folks catch the flu” (Freeman, 2020). Unfortunately, with the onset of Covid-19 the saying still rings true.

Nearly 20% of U.S. counties are disproportionately black, and they accounted for 52% of COVID-19 diagnoses and 58% of COVID-19 deaths nationally. County-level comparisons can both inform COVID-19 responses and identify epidemic hot spots. Social conditions, structural racism, and other factors elevate risk for COVID-19 diagnoses and deaths in black communities (Millet et al. 2020).

According to the CDC, factors such as discrimination: healthcare access and utilization, housing, and occupational, educational, income, and wealth gaps lead to more COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in areas where racial and ethnic minority groups live, learn, work, play, and worship. They have also contributed to higher rates of some medical conditions that increase one’s risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (CDC, 2020).

A review of the literature revealed that the experiences of Black families and students during distance learning has yet to be explored. For this reason, and as mentioned above, the background literature for this study includes research on the topics of (a) the benefits of culturally responsive instructional design during distance learning; (b) Black families and authentic school connections; (c) student school

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engagement. While these areas together can lead to an understanding of how to engage and support Black families, there was no comprehensive piece of research that spoke to the experiences of Black families during COVID-19. There is a need for research that addresses this and the ways in which schools might support Black families during distance learning. The research related to this topic indicates that the inequalities that Black families and students faced in traditional school settings are being exacerbated during distance learning. This, as well as the gap in the literature on Black family experiences, articulates the need for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this thesis is to engage in a phenomenology inquiry that will explore the lived experiences of Black families with young children, who are navigating distance learning during the mandatory COVID-19 shelter-in-place. Through the lens of Critical Race Theory and Critical Pedagogy this inquiry seeks to understand the lived experiences, perceptions and concerns that Black families are facing during this new era of mandated distance learning. Because Black families' voices are historically undervalued and silenced in formal and public institutions of education, this work seeks to acknowledge and amplify their voices. This study will be conducted among parents who have children enrolled at a K-5 elementary school in an historically Black neighborhood in a large city in California. The intended outcome is to name the lived realities that Black families are facing during COVID-19, and to understand the role that distance learning is playing in that lived experience.

Research Questions

This thesis engaged participants in a phenomenological study. For this reason, the research question was related to lived experience. Because the researchers intent was to

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understand the experience of Black families during COVID-19, and because the researcher was most interested in Black families with young children, the research question that guided this thesis was as follows: How do Black families with young children experience the COVID-19 shelter in place? The researcher was interested in how Black families with young children experience connections, isolation, and empowerment during the pandemic. The researcher was also interested in their experiences related to school during the mandatory shelter-in-place. However, in order to bracket my own experiences and agenda, my research question reflected a broader, more general question which may have allowed me to understand the experiences of my participants as they defined and prioritized them for themselves. In an attempt to get the explore the experiences of Black Families the researcher asked the following questions;

1. How did families with black children experience connections, isolations and empowerment during Covid-19?
2. How did Black families with young children experience shelter in place?
3. How did they experience the allocation of community resources in terms of education during covid-19?
4. How did Black families experience their relationships with teachers during COVID-19?

Theoretical Framework/Rationale

Critical Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory (CRT) was used as theoretical frameworks for this thesis. hooks' (1994) chapter on *Theory as a Liberatory Practice* was used to ground the theory so that Black families can read this work and see themselves, their practices, their beliefs as scholarly pieces of work. hooks stated that, “we must continually claim theory as necessary practice within a holistic framework of

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liberatory activism” and discusses how practitioners, activists, theorists, and academics can come together and find ways to celebrate and value theory in oral as well as written narratives (p. 7). Critical Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory is summarized below, and discussed at greater length in Chapter Two.

Critical Pedagogy is rooted in examining and dismantling power structures, such as institutional racism, that build, enable and sustain inequitable practices. This theoretical framework laid the foundation for how school systems could partner with Black Families and their children to not only critically think but critically question the status quo of the institution of American education. The foundational authors who have contributed to Critical Pedagogy include Freire (1972), who developed a liberatory pedagogy for oppressed and marginalized peoples. In addition to the work of Freire, this thesis will also be framed by the scholarship of González et. al. (2005) who developed the concept of *funds of knowledge* that recognize the cultural wealth that families contribute to education. Critical Pedagogy and *funds of knowledge* will be used in this thesis as a framework because by hearing and uplifting the experiences of Black families, the researcher hopes to illuminate some of the *funds of knowledge* that these Black families are engaging in during shelter in place orders.

Elements of the foundational Critical Race Theory will also be used to frame this thesis. CRT claims that race is a social construct. This construct is deeply embedded in systems of education, and it both affirms and maintains white supremacy. In order to understand the purpose and impact of formal education, it is important to understand and critique the role of race in education. CRT was used in this thesis because it could be used to explain how Black families have been historically silenced and why this cycle

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could continue in distance learning if not swiftly addressed. Some of the foundational authors who have contributed to CRT include Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) who make the claim that a race-based lens can be used as a way to understand school inequities, and Ledesma and Calderón (2014) who suggest that researchers use counter-narratives to illuminate the perceptions and experiences of Black and Brown students. Finally, the scholarship of Dixson and Rousseau Anderson (2016) will be used to demonstrate how counter stories can be used to show and highlight real life conditions in schools. Taken together, these authors provided a rationale for understanding why it is important to seek the stories, experiences and perceptions of conditions through the eyes of those who are marginalized and oppressed. They also provided a framework for understanding how these experiences and counter narratives can be used to challenge and dismantle the ideals of white supremacy, which is embedded in the system of education.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations including: the timeframe of the study, sample size, and data collection. The timeframe of this includes a limitation because the families that participate in this study are currently experiencing COVID-19. This could influence the results because Black families will need to maintain a level of introspection in order to participate in this study. This may be difficult to accomplish during a pandemic. Another limitation is the amount of time the researcher had to complete this study. Since this is a part of a master's thesis the researcher only had six months to complete this work. This could influence the results because we may not have time to complete a comprehensive study. Another limitation can be found in the convenience sample used for this study because not all members of the larger population of Black families were given an opportunity to participate in this study. This could influence the

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results because it will be focusing on the Black family population at one school site.

Other limitations to this study were the data collection methods; due to shelter in place and social distancing orders all interviews had to take place via zoom and goggle form.

Significance of the Study

This thesis is of interest to Black families because it gives them a chance to see themselves in the research and normalizes their shared experiences. This research is of interest to educators because it will give a window view of what their families/ students may be walking or logging in from so that they can come up with instructional supports/resources that will add to the educational experiences of their students. This thesis will be of interest to administrators, school districts, and policy makers, because it will highlight some ways that school systems can transform practices and policies that exacerbate the inequities but also uplift the revolutionary acts these Black families and students are making to continue learning in spite of the current dismay of the US educational system. Lastly this thesis will be of interest to community-based organizations and all of those committed to the well-being of Black families, because this work is the voice of Black families. This thesis aims to lift up the experiences of Black families whose voices have been silenced in education, and with the onset of COVID-19, and to prioritize those voices in the larger conversation about educational equity during the current pandemic.

Definition of Terms

- *Black*; the term Black will be used in this paper encompassing the descendants of the African diaspora. It is an ethnic and cultural group that ancestry is tied to ethnic groups in Africa.

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- *Covid-19*; “Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an illness caused by a virus that can spread from person to person” (Centers for Diseases Control and Presentation. 2019).
- *Culturally Responsive Teaching*; “designing dynamic environments and utilizing classroom practices that allow students to succeed academically” (Woodley et. al, 2017).
- *Cultural Reciprocity*; “acknowledges that sensitivity to cultural differences requires an awareness of one’s biases and the assumptions that guide one’s thinking and behaviors” (Harry et. al, 1999)
- *Distance Learning*; “access to learning for those who are geographically distant” (Moore et al.,2011, p. 129)
- *Shelter in Place*; an official order, issued during an emergency, that directs people to stay in the indoor place or building that they already occupy and not to leave unless absolutely necessary (Dictionary.com. 2020)

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

The claim of interpretation for this literature review is that during times of crisis-based distance learning, Black families may benefit from distance learning approaches that foster relationships and student engagement. The body of scholarship that justifies this claim includes three sets of evidence that demonstrate that (a) Black families may benefit from co-created culturally responsive instructional designs; designed with educators during distance learning; (b) Black students whose families have authentic connections with schools and community partnerships have higher rates of academic achievement (c) student engagement is directly affected by external factors such as family work schedules, financial obligations, and the capacity of the parent to serve as a teacher, especially in the distance/online learning environment. Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Pedagogy will be used to frame this body of scholarship.

Theoretical Framework

This literature review will make use of CRT and Critical Pedagogy as a framework for understanding the claim that Black families may benefit from culturally responsive instructional design during times of crisis-based distance learning. CRT claims that race is a social construct. This construct is deeply embedded in systems of education, and it both affirms and maintains white supremacy. In order to understand the purpose and impact of formal education, it is important to understand and critique the role of race in education. Related to this, Critical Pedagogy claims that if students are guided to think critically and to question the status quo, that they may be able to examine and dismantle the power structures that build, enable and sustain inequitable practices; such as racism. Freire (1998) argues that: “(1) there is no teaching without learning; (2) teaching is not just transferring knowledge; (3) teaching is a human act” (p. vii-

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viii) Developing this kind of critical consciousness, particularly as it relates to race, is important for classroom teachers who serve Black families. The following sections make the case for using both CRT and Critical Pedagogy as a theoretical framework for understanding why Black families may benefit from culturally responsive instructional designs during times of crisis-based distance learning. hooks (1994), discussed below, acts as a bridge between CRT and Critical Pedagogy.

In *Teaching to Transgress: Theory as Liberatory Practice*, hooks (1994) claims that there is a correlation between theory and practice and that “education can be transformative practice” (hooks, 1994). hooks uses her narrative to explain how and why theory should be grounded in the “ground work” of activists. Due to the societal shifts of this summer and how the onset of shelter in place orders have disrupted educational practices for the past eight months, Black Families were finally given space, time and opportunity to see (through Zoom) what was going on in the classroom. hooks went on to discuss how “some elite academics who construct theories of ‘blackness’ in ways that make it a critical terrain which only the chosen few can enter-using theoretical work on race to assert their authority over black experience, denying democratic access to the process of theory making-threaten collective Black Liberation struggle, so do those among us who react to this by promoting anti-intellectualism by declaring all theory as worthless” (hooks, 1994, p. 69). This hypothesis of hooks was solidified in the first wave of distance learning where we saw districts pour millions into providing devices and WIFI without conversations with Black families the willingness, availability, tech literacy, and experiences with technology being used in the current distance learning format. All the theory in the world means nothing if we don’t use it to inform

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practices/activism. Black families were given the technology but no guidance on how to use it. Researchers, theorists and practitioners must consider relevant practices, social movements taking place, and the work of those on the ground to push the boundaries of critical scholarship. Using hooks' (1994) claim of “theory as intervention, as a way to challenge the status quo” (p. 63), the following subsections will include brief histories of both Critical Race Theory and Critical Pedagogy Theory, to show guidance as to how this study will attempt to use the narratives of the participants to challenge the current roll-out of distance learning.

Critical Race Theory

This section includes a brief history of Critical Race Theory which includes (a) Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education* which theorizes (1) race continues to be significant in the United States; (2) U.S. society is based on property rights rather than human rights; and (3) the intersection of race and property creates an analytical tool for understanding inequity; (b) Ledesma and Calderón's (2014) *Critical Race Theory in education: A Review of Past Literature* and a look to the future, which articulates, “oppression and racism can be experienced within and across divergent intersectional planes, such as classism, sexism, ableism and engagement and articulation with the material, structural, and ideological mechanisms of White supremacy to examine the role of race and racism in education” (p. 207); and (c) Dixson and Rousseau Anderson's (2016) *Critical Race Theory in Education: All God's Children Got a Song. The First Day of School; A CRT Story* which discusses the potential of community cultural wealth to transform the process of schooling by examining the use of counter narratives. This progression of thought is important because it demonstrates that race is prevalent and persistent in every institution in the United States. These works

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show that one cannot truly talk about education, if you're not looking at the role that race plays in education. Critical Race Theory in Education progressed to show how CRT scholars have used race to understand school inequities and then gives examples of how research can be looked at and designed to start expressing the experiences of Black students in public education systems so that we (practitioners, community members and families) can move to start having the conversation around dismantling racist inequities in school systems. In terms of this current study these works heightened the needs for the Black experience during shelter in place and distance learning during the pandemic to be highlighted.

The foundational work that defines critical race theory is Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995). *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education*, which theorizes that race should be used as an analytical tool for understanding school inequities. This scholarship, or academic study, proposes that at the time race remained untheorized, and “that race and blackness matter in more detailed ways” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 52). It also proposed that there was an entanglement of democracy and capitalism and that there was an intersection of race and property as it relates to intellectual property. We see elements of this in shelter in place with who got to work from and who was able to stay home. This theory challenges that the intersectionality of race and property is a central tenet of critical race theory and “along with providing educational standards that detail what students should know and be able to do they must behave with material resources that support their learning” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 58). We are confronted with elements of this in distance learning by learning who had reliable connection to technology and who did not. This original scholarship is important because it laid the

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foundation for implications of race/racism in education and how, “critical race theoretical perspectives cast a new gaze on the persistent problems of racism in schooling” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 57).

Building on this foundation, Ledesma and Calderón (2014) *Critical Race Theory in Education: A Review of Past Literature and a Look to the Future*, illustrates how race and racism manifest in the K-12 pipeline and offers tools and practices to engage in work against racism in education. This is related to the work of Ladson-Billings and Tate because it builds on the cautions that Ladson-Billings proposes that CRT scholars have to analyze the perceptions experiences and counter-narratives in their work and still have the commitment to the connectedness of race in education. It differs from the work of Ladson-Billings and Tate because it takes an analytic view of what CRT scholars have been working on in the field: “The depth of this work demonstrates the necessity of CRT in education, illuminating that we cannot truly assess, respond, and promote educational research and praxis devoid of the deep and entrenched nature of White supremacy in U.S. Society” (Ledesma & Calderón, 2014, p. 208). This addition to the field of CRT is important because it shows that 9 years after the seminal work of Ladson-Billings and Tate that CRT is no longer seen as a new project that it exposes how race is a sociohistorical construct that affects all parts of life in particular education: “CRT has proven to be invaluable in helping us name and challenge the White supremacist patriarchy (bell) that has historically framed and shaped educational opportunity for all throughout the k-20 pipeline” (Ledesma & Calderón, 2014,p. 218). This work also brought in the conversation that “CRT centers the need of community engagement in doing this work. In K-12 research, the role of communities of color in shaping the

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direction and driving the work of Critical Race work remains paramount” (Ledesma & Calderón, 2014, p. 219). This highlights why the current research is valued and needed. The interview of the participants illuminates the perceptions, experiences, and counter narratives Ledesma and Calderón highlighted in their research.

Another progression in this field of thought is represented by Dixson and Rousseau Anderson (2016). *Critical Race Theory in Education: All God's Children Got a Song. The First Day of School; A CRT Story*, which illustrates how CRT scholars use counter stories as an example of how CRT scholars understand race and racism. This is related to the work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) & Ledesma and Calderón (2014) because it shows a progression of how CRT has used the voice and experiences of people of color to the world of academia. A world that has historically discounted them from the conversation “...because the stories of people of color are not part of the dominant discourse, it is this group that is most likely to suffer under a contextual approach of traditional legal analysis” (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2016, p. 62)”. It differs from the work of Ledesma and Calderón (2014) because instead of talking about how race and racism manifest in the K-12 pipeline in the classroom, in education policy and within community, Dixson and Rousseau Anderson use counter stories to show a real-life condition of schools to highlight and analyze the racist systems Black students and their families have to navigate. This addition to the field of CRT is important because it gives an example of the use of counter stories and what they represent, “counter stories represent the perspective of students of color...the counter stories point to the inequities of the system through the experiences of the students” (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2016, p. 63) This study continues the work of Dixson and Rousseau Anderson by

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providing more real-life examples but also highlights how these families are navigating these systems and the inequalities in education that still exist.

In summary, critical race in education theory claims that race is a social construct that is prevalent in the system of education and holds space in the structural and ideological system in White Supremacy. This includes Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995). *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education*, which theorizes that race should be used as an analytical tool for understanding school inequities. Ledesma and Calderón (2014). *Critical Race Theory in Education: A Review of Past Literature and a Look to the Future*, illustrates how race and racism manifest in the K-12 pipeline and offers tools and practices to engage in work against racism in education. Dixson and Rousseau Anderson, (2016). *Critical Race Theory in Education: All God's Children Got a Song. The First Day of School; A CRT Story*. Which illustrates how CRT scholars use counter stories as an example of how CRT scholars understand race and racism. Within this current context everyone is learning how to live in this new normal, however critical race theory articulates the extra steps of double consciousness that Black Families have to navigate on top of Covid-19, shelter in place in order for their children to participate in distance learning.

Critical Pedagogy Theory

This section includes a brief history of Critical Pedagogy Theory which includes (a) Freire's (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* which proposes that the solution is to transform structures such as school systems, so that oppressed or marginalized peoples can become beings for themselves and (b) González, Moll, , and Amanti (2005) *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practice in Households, Communities, and Classrooms* which introduces the term *funds of knowledge* and analyzes how families use their funds of

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knowledge to build networks when dealing with challenging difficult social and emotional circumstances. This progression of thought is important because Critical Pedagogy expresses the need for reflective teaching and reflective practices. If educators/practitioners are really truly teaching to transform and make the world a better place, education really has to look at the role of the institution of education is producing and who we are serving. Instead of looking at the systems and how we fit into the system we need to look at how systems fit into us and our daily lives and practices and do these systems benefit us or do we benefit the system. By us being marginalized groups, specifically Black people, the ones that are usually not named and spoken of as assets, the ones who are historically spoken about are defects or invisible. This chronological progression of Critical Pedagogy shows the building blocks and foundations of what had to take place to make sure that all parties and all people's voices and assets are named and brought into educational spaces. This study is rooted in highlighting the importance of having consistent, thoughtful conversations with Black families so that educators can partner with Black families to infuse Black families' funds of knowledge to transform school systems.

The foundational work that defines Critical Pedagogy includes Freire's (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This scholarship questions, "How can the oppressed, as divided unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation?" (Freire, 1972, p. 48). Freire (1972) illustrates the idea of problem posing education and defines the *banking method of education*, where teachers give information to their students and their students only job is to accept and regurgitate the information when prompted. This past summer highlighted the manifestation of this. Streets were filled with

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young activist naming the lack of or the “white supremacist” education they had received and the biases that went along with that. The banking method is problematic to all of education and more specifically the education of marginalized groups because it eliminates the space for critical thinking and questioning needed for liberatory education to take place. Society also saw and heard the Black response to the civil rights uprising of Summer 2020. Black parents have always had to have conversations about navigating Blackness at home. We have always had to navigate institutions differently because of our race in this country in silence. By replacing the banking model of education with a problem posing education, educators, “constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the student. The student no longer docile learners- are now critical co-investigators” (Freire, 1974, p. 80-81). This theory challenges the notion of education being access to freedom. If everyone is expected to be free our educational systems should allow, facilitate and guide our youngest members of society to engage in liberatory education. This original scholarship is important because it lays the framework for how a liberatory, problem posing education should be developed. The intent is that this study continues this thought.

Another progression in this field of thought is represented by González, Moll, , and Amanti (2005) *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practice in Households, Communities, and Classrooms*, which investigates the role that students’ households and community resources play in the education of students. This is related to the work of Freire (1972) and Ladson-Billings (1995) because it shows a progression of how Critical Pedagogy grew throughout the years. At the time this article was written Critical Pedagogy was widely recognized, accepted and practiced in many schools and districts

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serving marginalized families, but in mainstream education the idea of cultural wealth and or capital; the lived and cultural experiences that one's family possess, was a new topic and what students and their families brought to the educational table were not recognized or accepted as assets. This work gave way to starting the conversation of the different funds of knowledge, and how if educators partnered with families and communities leveraging these funds of knowledge with culturally relevant pedagogy could lead to the transformative liberating education that Freire discussed in his foundational Critical Pedagogy work. This current study continues to lift and name these funds of knowledge to provide foundations for collaborative/inclusionary instructional practices and designs.

In summary, Critical Pedagogy Theory claims that if students are guided to critically think and question the status quo, that they will take control of their learning and lives to examine and dismantle the power structures that build, enable and sustain inequitable practices; such as racism, sexism, classism, etc. This includes (a) Freire's (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Which questions, "How can the oppressed, as divided unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation?" (Freire, 1972, 48) this illustrates the idea of problem posing education and defines the *banking method of education*, (b) González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practice in Households, Communities, and Classrooms*, which investigates the role that students' households and community resources play in the education of students. In this current climate, where parents have essentially become teachers and teachers have become instructional coaches, Critical Pedagogy could be used to support

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Black families in transforming conversations with their children which will inform collaborative instructional practices and design.

Related to this, is a body of research that demonstrates the practical application of Critical Race and Critical Pedagogy Theories. This body of research is intended to demonstrate that Black families may benefit from co-constructed culturally responsive instructional design between Black families and school systems during times of crisis-based distance learning, Black students whose families have authentic connections with schools and community partnerships have higher rates of engagement than Black students who don't and student engagement is directly affected by external factors such as; families work schedules, families financial obligations and the parent as teacher, especially in the distance/online learning environment. The following sections describe this research and justify the claim that Black families may benefit from co-constructed culturally responsive instructional design between Black families and school systems during times of crisis-based distance learning

Benefit of Culturally Responsive Distance Learning Approaches

Research demonstrates the importance of understanding the role of cultural assumptions in distance learning (c) a discussion of how educators/families view/utilize distance learning. This is important because in order for distance learning to work, educators, families, must be ready to continue the culturally responsive work of a traditional classroom but also know that mandated distance learning is a new educational landscape. This section also highlights that cultural sensitivity is key and there is a need for explicit training or webinars so that this can happen. If this is done effectively, Black

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families may benefit from environments/ spaces that foster relationships and student engagement, during times of crisis-based distance learning.

Alashaikh (2015) articulates, “students who learn within an environment that is suitable for their learning styles to garner higher test scores” (p. 72). Due to current shelter in place orders due to Covid- 19 students learning environments have dramatically shifted. Students went from attending school Monday-Friday from 8:30am- 2:40pm with scheduled and consistent routines to the new distance learning format. There were recommendations but no consistency or guidance on how to bring the consistency or school community into the homes of Black families. Educators in SFUSD were expected to engage synchronously 120 minutes, five days a week. However, students could engage in a myriad of ways; participating in live video conferencing with video on/off, mute on/off, families and educators have phone or text check ins or paper-based work mailed between school and families. The current research intends to explore the stories of what Black families name the disconnect between distance learning and the family’s new reality so that school systems can meet families where they are at and support Black families by supporting their immediate needs, so that Black students and their families can become actively engaged in the distance learning format.

Related to this, research, investigating the importance of the role of cultural assumptions in distance learning, articulates that educators have to be cognizant of the cultural assets their students come online with. Evidence of this can be found in Uzuner (2009) who articulates through research that cultural values; such as face to face communication and eye contact, value systems and gender roles; such as who is responsible for household chores, who supplies the money, food, shelter and access to

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technology were amplified online and affected who and how students could engage with distance learning. This research illustrates that educators must understand and actively work towards creating space for their students' culture in the distance learning classroom, so that their students have the opportunity to think and question critically.

A final body of research holds a discussion of how educators view/utilize distance learning in terms of cultural instructional designs. Evidence of this can be found in Uzuner (2009) who claims that even though instructional designers and/or educators are aware of potential cultural differences and the importance of culturally responsive teaching they do not always integrate that knowledge into the design of the online classrooms. In contrast, Alashaikh (2015) claims that, effective educators and school systems need to develop the necessary skills to be able to produce culturally sensitive learning environments and then go on to state, “ In order for students to truly benefit from instruction, teachers and school systems, should be cognizant of the cultures of their learners and how those cultures manifest themselves in the learning preference(p.8)” in online environments and design to fit the needs of those students. This articulates that Black families and their child’s instructor must collaborate so that engagement and learning can place in the distance learning format. Similarly, Woodley, Hernandez, Parra, and Negash, (2017) adds that even though distance educators have a lot to hold within the design and teaching phases they must “encourage academic success and cultural competence, they must help students to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequalities” (Woodley, Hernandez, Parra and Negash, 2017, p.471). When taken together, this research suggests that educators and school systems must hold culturally understanding and Black Families needs at the forefront of their work because in the

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distance learning format students are in the midst of their social cultural realities while “logging into” another social cultural reality which typically does not acknowledge/value that culture the student is from. So, educators must take the extra step to acknowledge, honor and leverage students' home socio-cultural values in online distance learning to help students reach academic success.

In summary, research demonstrates (a) the importance of understanding the role of cultural assumptions in distance learning and (b) a discussion of how educators view/utilize distance learning. Taken together, this body of research justifies Black families may benefit from co-constructed culturally responsive distance learning approaches between Black families and school systems during times of crisis-based distance learning. Related to this is the relationship between Black students and their family's connections with authentic home school and community partnerships.

Black Students and Authentic Home School Partnerships

Similar to the claim that students benefit from culturally responsive instructional designs during distance learning, research demonstrates that Black students and families need to have authentic connections with schools and community partnerships. This includes (a) research that illustrates factors that make Black parents and students feel isolated in school, (b) research that articulates that Black families use community connections to support students learning outside of school, and (c) research that shows the role that teachers administrators and school systems play. This is important because it illuminates the idea that if Black families are not connected with the school, the student won't be connected; which leads to questions surrounding the role of community school partnerships during distance learning and shelter in place orders. These articles and research show both sides of that story; what happens when Black families are supported

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in educational spaces and what happens when they are not. This section also takes a look at the role that communities and community-based partnerships play in this dichotomy.

To begin, research illustrates that due to models such as Epstein's Framework for Six Types of Parental Involvement (Epstein et. al., 1997), schools are set up on cultural insensitive models. These practices lead to Black families feeling ignored and unseen. Evidence of this can be found in Latunde and Clark-Louque (2016) who claims that “Black families often feel their efforts to engage with their children’s education are largely ignored by schools and in literature (p. 72)”. Their research went on to say that only thirty percent of Black families surveyed reported weekly communication with their child's school. Similarly, Brown and Brandon (2007) identified that there were nine factors that impacted parent participation and lead to Black parent isolation; cultural and linguistic diversity, economics, family composition, parental educational level, school communication, interaction with teachers, interaction with the school, school success of children and personal constraints such as time, transportation, child care and scheduling conflicts also parents own negative school experiences. When Black families encounter these barriers, it may cause them to feel alienated for the school and disengage. Clark-Louque and colleagues (2017) add that even on the policy and legislation level Black families and students are unseen. Their research focused on California AB 97 or the Local Control Funding Formula which was designed to assist in school reform. However, it made no mention of Black students or Black families when emphasizing improved outcomes for their students. In sum, this research articulates that Black families and Black students are consistently left out of the conversation surrounding educational

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practices and policies that directly affect them; and this current study aims to not only bring Black families into the conversation but into educational policy.

Related to this, research articulates that Black families use community connections and relationships to support students learning outside of school. Evidence of this can be found in Brown and Brandon (2007) who showed if schools and educators want to close the achievement gap that they must make proactive plans that seek to understand relationships among Black families, the school and the community. The research of Latunde and Clark-Louque (2014) adds that there are four types of community resources that Black families use to support them. They suggest

- programs and organizations geared specifically to African American students and their parents
- personal life experiences
- professional and formal information sources such as libraries, journals, schools/universities, and seminars
- social interactions via friends, parents, and the Internet. (Latunde and Clark-Louque, 2014, p. 8)

The use of these community resources allows Black families an opportunity to extend the learning from school to home and provide enriching experiences that celebrate the cultural wealth that Black families bring to the table. Similarly, Latunde and Clark-Louque (2016) go on to claim that Black families seek out community resources and places of socialization that are geared towards black families as a way to learn from each other practicing cultural reciprocity. Their research went on to highlight that 60% of black families surveyed reported that they engage in these types of cultural reciprocity

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activities such as “trips to museums, participation in Girl Scouts, visits to the library, special academic programs, faith-based learning, after-school programs and summer learning programs” (p. 75). In total, this research illustrates that Black families use community resources as ways to highlight their cultural capital when educational spaces do not, and if educational systems want to engage and partner with Black families they will have to find ways to introduce Black family’s cultural capital consistently in educational spaces in both traditional settings and distance learning settings. This current study intends to illuminate which community connections and relationships Black families used to support them and their students during distance learning and shelter in place orders.

The final body of research claims that teachers, administrators and school systems can play a huge role in the way authentic connections can be made between Black families and Black students. Evidence of this can be found in Latunde & Clark-Louque (2016) who claims that because schools are using outdated markers of success they are not culturally sensitive and therefore their parental involvement initiatives reflect disillusioned approaches. These practices and approaches leave Black families feeling isolated and this causes them to disengage and not participate in the educational system that their children are a part of. Similarly, Brown and Brandon (2007) illuminates that most educators lack the education, experience and respect that prepares them to acknowledge differing parenting styles and partner with Black parents. This leaves Black parents feeling undermined and disrespected so they disengage from the conversation. With the new lift of distance learning feelings of isolation, neglect and may be exacerbated if the current use of outdated/ disillusioned approaches or “markers of

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success” persist. In contrast, Clark-Louque and colleagues (2017) illustrate that when the student feels a connection, learning can take place. In this study, students expressed that “teachers who have the most impact on students are the teachers who make learning fun and the teachers who care about students” (p. 8). When taken together, this research suggests that even though historically; school systems, teachers and administrators have not always been culturally sensitive and made authentic connections, it is possible. Once Black students and families see that the educator is attempting to build and sustain that connection, Black families can acknowledge and appreciate it and eventually learning is able to take place.

This is important because it illuminates the idea that if Black families are not connected with the school, the student won't be connected. These articles and research show both sides of that story; what happens when Black families are supported in educational spaces and what happens when they are not. This section also takes a look at the role that communities and community-based partnerships can play in this dichotomy. The current study intends to call attention to ways Black families are experiencing or not experiencing those connections.

In summary, research demonstrates that Black students and families need to have authentic connections with schools and community partnerships. This includes (a) research that illustrates factors that make Black parents and students feel isolated in school (b) research that articulates that Black families use community connections to support students learning outside of school (c) research that shows the role that teachers administrators and school systems play. Taken together, this body of research justifies that Black families may benefit from co-constructed culturally responsive instructional

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design between Black families and school systems during times of crisis-based distance learning. Related to this is the role familial external factors play on distance learning and how that affects student engagement.

Student Engagement and the Distance Learning Environment

Similar to the research surrounding Black students and families and the need to have authentic connections with schools and community partnerships, research demonstrates that Student Engagement is directly affected by external factors. This includes (a) research that illustrates families work schedules, (b) research that articulates families views and assumptions surrounding use of technology in the distance learning environment, and (c) research that claims there is a redefined role of parents as facilitator. This is important because when taken together, the findings suggest that the roles that the external factors play will greatly affect the learning that takes place, especially in the distance/online learning environment, will all have to be considered and supported for distance/online learning to happen.

To begin, research illustrates family work schedules greatly affect the role that families can be engaged in and support students learning: “Peer and family influences have a greater influence on student achievement than schools” (Makarewicz, 2013, p. 41)/ If parents don’t have the time or the flexibility to support students with their learning especially during virtual learning, students will lack the support they need to be successful. Evidence of this can be found in Makarewicz. (2013) who claims “those who were in careers with lower pay, less flexibility, and more distant from home, were the parents who did not have the resources for parent engagement” (p. 218). Plowman, Stevenson, McPake, Stephen, and Adey (2011) add that since a child's learning cannot be

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separated from the learning environment, in distance learning the people who are at home can either support or hinder the learning process. Parent and family engagement is key.

Makarewicz (2013) makes the argument that one's job can affect the level of parental engagement in various ways. Makarewicz suggests that these factors are

- job search time
- ability to afford extracurricular activities and related transportation
- Housing location choice and affordability
- Long and expensive work commutes, reducing time, energy and money for engagement
- Stress and burnout
- Lack of satisfaction,
- Role modeling for kids,
- Benefits, flex hours, and time off for engagement (Makarewicz, 2013, p. 217).

In sum, this research articulates the research of Curie-Rubin and Smith (2014) who claims that virtual learning allows for flexible schedules, however teachers will have to be aware and assist families in identifying best practices that fits the needs of their household in times of crisis based learning, in addition to the normal management of a household.

Related to this, research investigating families' views and assumptions surrounding use of technology in the distance learning environment articulates that families' economic status and financial obligations may affect the way that technology is used during distance learning. We have seen the effects of this with the roll out of tech. Families received devices and WIFI but still did not log on. Evidence of this can be found in Parkes, Gregory, Fletcher, Adlington, and Gromik (2015) who claim that the use of

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technology in distance learning may exacerbate inequalities. Access to technology, internet bandwidth access, IT support, computer servicing and computer repair, disproportionately affect students who are already dealing with financial obligations and financial insecurities. Similarly, Plowman, Stevenson, McPake, Stephen, and Adey (2011) add that just because one owns a technology-enabled device doesn't mean that they use it in the same way. Their research showed that more advantaged families who had expensive and up-to-date technology did provide more access to their students than their disadvantaged counterparts who were more relaxed about their kids using technology. Navigating educational applications such as zoom, seesaw, the google suite on chrome books, was a new lift for families accustomed to using smartphones to engage on social media platforms. These findings led them to the discussion surrounding how families viewed use of technology as a tool or toy. Their research went on to say “The role of parents values and attitudes was a key factor in enabling or constraining opportunities for learning with technology” (p. 367). In total, this research illustrates that in addition to having access to the technology a family has to understand how technology can be used as a tool to assist in education and then have the time and resources to help students engage with technology in that way. The current study attempts to illuminate the ways in which Black Families experience the new technology lift.

The final body of research claims that there is a redefined role of parents as facilitator in the distance learning environment. Evidence of this can be found in Curie-Rubin and Smith, (2014) who claims families will take the role of facilitator and teachers will have to take the role of coach supporting families in multiple ways through email, phone calls, and the use of tools like video conferences. Similarly, Plowman and

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colleagues (2011) demonstrates that in distance learning families had a significant role in supporting children's learning. Their research highlighted that parents have new roles consisting of “orchestrating learning through the provision of resources, setting up activities, overseeing safety and ensuring that children were not getting stuck” (p. 367). When taken together, this research suggests in distance learning there is a shift in the Parent-Teacher relationship. Teachers become coaches and parents become facilitators or distance educators. They have to work in tandem together to make sure that learning is happening through a multitude of resources but it ultimately has to be a partnership between the parties to make sure that the student is learning in the distance learning environment. The research in this study intends to spotlight the new relationships made with Black families and educators and what that experience was.

In summary, research demonstrates that student engagement is directly affected by external factors. This includes (a) research that illustrates families work schedules (b) research that articulates families views and assumptions surrounding use of technology in the distance learning environment and (c) research that claims there is a redefined role of parents as facilitator. Taken together, this body of research justifies Black families may benefit from co-constructed culturally responsive instructional design between Black families and school systems during times of crisis-based distance learning and calls to attention the need to explore the experiences of Black families and their child’s engagement with distance learning.

Summary

This literature review claims that Black families may benefit from co-constructed culturally responsive instructional design between Black families and school systems during times of crisis-based distance learning. Evidence that supports this claim

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includes research that finds Black students benefit from culturally responsive instructional designs during distance learning. Black students and families thrive and feel valued with authentic connections to schools and community resources, and that the role of engagement (parent and student) is as pressing as ever in regards to distance learning. This claim and body of evidence addresses a few related areas of study that include distance learning, Black families and students and culturally responsive instructional designs. It seems like a discussion/study of Black families experiences/perceptions surrounding distance learning is missing from the existing literature. With my thesis, I propose to fill that gap by conducting a case study involving kindergarten, first and second grade families in a school situated in the Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood of San Francisco. By engaging with Black families at this school my hope is to give voice to what these Black families experiences and perceptions were in regards to distance learning and education during the covid-19 crisis that led to distance learning during the academic school year. I am hoping that this work reaches Black families, and educators, and school systems that are committed to providing Black families and student with a liberatory education and that this research gives academia a lens into the voice that Black families need to express what they envision education looks, feels and sounds like for their babies during the crisis-based distance learning.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Historically Black families stories and experiences have been silenced and marginalized, especially during times of social unrest. With the sudden closures of schools, businesses, medical offices because of Covid -19 shelter in place orders, I saw this phenomenon resurface. I explored the lived experiences of Black families surrounding distance learning as a way to highlight and understand the ways that Black families have viewed and responded to Covid-19 and distance learning. The questions that guided this study were:

- How did families with black children experience connections, isolations and empowerment during Covid-19?
- How did Black families with young children experience shelter in place?
- How did they experience the allocation of community resources in terms of education during covid-19?
- How did Black families experience their relationships with teachers during COVID-19?

Methodology Summary and Rationale

This section describes the methodology I used to address this problem, which was a phenomenological study exploring the lived experiences of Black families with young children during the mandatory shelter-in-place and distance learning prompted by COVID-19. Since my aim is to uplift and highlight the voices of Black families in this particular point of time I sought a methodology that allowed for explorative research. According to Creswell (2013), a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. (p.57) . By exploring the lived experiences of these families, my aim is to understand their truth and

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to provide them with a formal opportunity to articulate how education looks, feels and sounds like during the current pandemic. Historically the voices and experiences of Black families and in particular Black mothers have been silenced or marginalized. The aim of this study is to provide a counter-narrative by recognizing and uplifting these important voices.

Groenewald (2004) provides an overview for phenomenological research and named that this approach allows for research methods that include interviews and field notes. Due to the mandatory shelter-in-place, I choose to use only interviews. Through these interviews, I aimed to understand the lived experiences of Black families with young children. In addition to interviews LeVasseur (2003) defines the technique of bracketing in phenomenology. LeVasseur identified the notion of *persistent curiosity* through which the researcher understands that their assumptions and biases may jumpstart their initial curiosity but must be set back in order to allow the interviews and field notes to lead the research to a new understanding (p. 419). During the research process, I leaned on my persistent curiosity about Black families and made every effort to bracket my own experiences as a Black mother and educator. The topic of life during the pandemic is complex and multi-layered, and the narratives that the families shared allowed for new understanding. It is my hope that this study will “show how our words, concepts and theories shape and give structure to our experiences as we live them” (Adams & van Manen, 2008, p. 4).

Finally, as a researcher I hold a positive bias toward the research site and the population from which the participants will be recruited. I self-identify as a Black mother and I am also an educator at the school where the study will be done and a native of the

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community in which the school is located. These things may limit the data collection and interpretations because I have a deep connection to the research and a positive bias towards the population from which the sample will be drawn. I also have my own lived experiences as a Black parent, and an educator during this time. While the relational trust previously developed with the families at my school site, as well my own identity as a Black mother, may allow me to better understand the experiences of Black families during the shelter in place, it also defines my subjectivity.

Research Setting and Participants

Setting

Due to shelter in place orders the study took place virtually through Zoom. Interviews were scheduled based on the availability of the participants. Due to the nature of zoom and video conferencing the actual location of the participant during the interview varied. As a result, one participant could not participate via video conferencing, so in the hopes of uplifting all the voices without barriers, at the request of the participant, the researcher sent the interview questions via google forms. The participant responded to the questions in short answer form. The researcher conducted the interviews from her home office, as the city remains under a mandatory shelter-in-place.

Participants: Sampling/Recruitment Plan

The sampling procedure used by the researcher was purposive sampling. The participants were parents and guardians, over the age of 18, recruited from the larger population of families at the school where the researcher is a teacher. Participants were recruited by placing an announcement in the school's weekly newsletter as well as the through school social media accounts. Parents and guardians interested in participating

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were given a copy of the *Participants Rights*, as well as a consent form and were read an interview protocol (see Appendix C).

The school population from which the participants will be recruited is an urban K-5 public elementary school located in an historically Black neighborhood, in a large urban city in Northern California. At this school, 82 % of students at the school qualified for free lunch, 7.3 % of the student body were identified English Language Learners, and 14.6 % of students were identified as special needs students. In addition, 43% of students identify as Black; 20.5% declined to state a racial identity category; 15.9% of students identify as Pacific Islander; 13.9% identify as Latinx; 4% identify as multi-racial; 2% identify as Asian; and .7% of the students identify as Native Peoples. The school has 11 classrooms, 150 children, and 11 teachers. The researcher is a teacher at this school.

Participant Descriptions

Participants in this study included five parents. Participants included five self-identified Black Women. All participants in this study were volunteers. Since the study is focused on the lived experiences of Black families, the study only sought Black community members. Participants were at least 18 years of age and a parent of a student enrolled at the elementary school. In order to keep anonymity, the participants were given pseudonyms. The table below will include participants' pseudonyms and a brief background of them and their family.

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Pseudonyms	Family Background
Aminatu	Mother of one boy, married, career in social work, the diaper lady
Makeda	Mother/ caregiver of 6 (children range from 4- 16) new to school and city, has a partner, was unemployed at time of study, has partner and family support
Nandi	Mother of 3 (children range from 20- 6) also caring for 1yo grandson quit job to care for children due to shelter in place orders
Moremi	Mother of 3 young children (2-8), Educator, working in learning hub, married, moved during the pandemic
Kandake	Mother of 4 boys (4-18), married, primary caretaker, career in health

Data Collection

According to Creswell (2006), interviews are appropriate choices for a phenomenological study because the aim of phenomenology is to explore the lived experiences of individuals during a particular phenomenon and one way to do that is to have conversations where community members can share their conscious experiences. The data collection method for this phenomenology of Black Families and COVID-19 was interviews. The researcher conducted 1-hour zoom interviews with four participants from a local public school where the researcher was an educator. Due to the technology issues, work and parenting schedules, one of the participants had to complete the interview via Google forms. There were probing questions that were asked to help answer the research questions. Through the school where I worked as an educator I received approval from administration to recruit for participants at my school site. I then

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place the ad for recruitment (Appendix D) in the school newsletter and grade level webpages. The researcher also posted on school social media accounts. After about 2-3 weeks, I sent the ad to parents in my class on our class newsletter and the above participants reached out expressing interest. Prior to being interviewed, participants were given copies of the *Participants Rights*, as well as a consent form and were read an interview protocol. Participants signed the consent form via DocuSign and then we (participants and researcher) determined the best time to meet via Zoom. The zoom interviews were recorded for transcription purposes. There was one participant who could not do a Zoom interview due to scheduling conflicts. Since they were extremely interested in participating, the researcher sent the participant the interview questions via Google Forms. Since this study was rooted in uplifting the voices of all., the researcher felt it imperative to include accommodations for participants who could not complete the interview via Zoom. Interviews were used to allow the community members space to share their stories. By having conversations, the aim of the study formatted this way is to allow participants to share their truth. The use of three or four prompts were used to start the conversation and re-engage when the conversation between community member and researcher became stagnant. Interviews were about 30-45 mins depending on the flow and responses of the participants.

Data Analysis

An analysis of the data for this phenomenological study was organized by the researcher, using transcription services through Zoom and an explication method. First, zoom interviews were recorded and transcribed via Zoom transcription services. While interviewing the participants the researcher wrote big quotes or ideas that stood out from

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each of the conversations. After all the data was in, the researcher listened to the recordings three times. When listening the first time the researcher attempted to just listen openly to the stories that the mothers shared. The second listening session the researcher listened to the recordings and began to organize and transcribe the recordings of the stories of the community members. After that, the third listening session consisted of the researcher reviewing the data in order to pull out the pertinent experiences that were related to the research questions. The researcher then explicated the data in order to generate themes. Finally, the researcher shared the evidence, organized by theme, with the participants in order to make sure that their stories were being uplifted and framed in a way that authenticates their lived experiences. This was done in order to establish the validity of the findings.

Plan for the Protection of Human Subjects

The plan for the protection of human subjects included (a) the informed consent process (b) informing subjects of study procedures (c) addressing the confidentiality of records and identity (d) identifying potential risk and its minimization (e) identifying potential benefits. Participants were engaged in the process of informed consent by presenting the informed consent to participants at the beginning of the onboarding process. The potential participants indicated they have read the consent form and agreed to participate by completing and emailing the forms to the researcher before the Zoom interview date. The participants who gave their consent to participate were informed of the study procedures when scheduling the interview session, and were allowed to ask questions at that time and throughout the study process.

The participants were informed that all individual information will be protected. For example, all participants were assigned pseudonym and contact

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information will be stored in a separate location than the interview recordings. No personal information was collected other than basic contact information. The online video conferencing system (Zoom) did not save IP address or other identifying information. Data was kept on a password protected computer and destroyed three years after completion of the research. No data was collected from community members who choose to 'opt out' during the research process. No one had access to the data but the researcher and the thesis advisor. Participants were made aware that while there are no benefits to the participants in this study, results may help practitioners and researchers better understand Black family's experiences related to COVID-19 and it will give participants the opportunity to have their voices heard. There was minimal risk associated with participation in this study; however, if community members feel uncomfortable with a question they were informed that they could skip it. Likewise, if they experienced fatigue or experience an emotional trigger, they were encouraged to take a short break and return to the interview at a later time.

In summary, by using a phenomenological approach to this study the researcher intended to uplift and recognize the voices of Black women and the lived experiences they bring to the conversation. By uplifting the voices of those who are consistently, historically and systemically silenced this study provided a much-needed window into how Black families, more specifically Black women, were navigating these uncertain times. A discussion of the procedure, study participants, data collection, and interview questions outlined the specifics of how the study was conducted and who participated in the study. A critical race and critical pedagogy phenomenological theory methodology was used to highlight a narrative of what it truly feels like to live as a Black Parent during

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the time of Covid-19 and racial uprising. All study participants contributed to this narrative by sharing their experiences. The goal of Chapter IV is to provide the study results and demonstrate that the methodology described in Chapter III was followed.

Chapter Four: Results

In the middle of a pandemic and uprising, society as a whole is re-evaluating key foundations and the way these foundations impact our day to day lives. In the past seven months, there have been historic shifts in the conversations surrounding race, class and gender not only in the US but globally. The way that industries, governments and institutions move have been spotlighted and the systemic flaws in these entities have been highlighted, examined, and the call for abolition has arisen. While all of this is needed, welcomed, and celebrated, this study and the researcher aimed to see how these shifts affected the day to day and lived experiences of one of those marginalized groups--Black families--in relation to one the institutions that have been highlighted the most during this time, education during distance learning. By listening to the narratives of five Black Families this study was able to explore, uplift and highlight how a sampling of Black Families are experiencing, navigating and thriving through Covid- 19 and Distance Learning with school aged children.

The following research questions guided this phenomenological study:

1. How did families with black children experience connections, isolations and empowerment during Covid-19?
2. How did Black families with young children experience shelter in place?
3. How did they experience the allocation of community resources in terms of education during covid-19?
4. How did Black families experience their relationships with teachers during COVID-19?

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I found that Black families experienced a range of struggles and challenges and found ways to thrive due to their own resilience and that of their communities.

Research Question One: How Did Families with Black Children Experience Connections, Isolations and Empowerment During Covid-19?

The data gathered in response to the first research question can be organized according to the following themes: (a) reconnections, (b) isolations, and (c) sense of self.

Theme one presents findings related to the idea of authentic partnerships. The participants' narratives shared one common perspective; one will not engage or show up for something or someone they do not feel a connection with. Results that illustrate the feelings of isolation and grief during this time are presented under the heading theme two. Finally, theme three presents findings that address Black Mama experiences surrounding sense of self.

Reconnections

The data revealed that during the past few months, the participants were not trying to find new connections, they were attempting to reconnect with people who already knew your story and what you needed, it was all about the village support. Aminatu, named that this experience, “reconnected me to the community”. Historically Black families and communities have always relied on each other but with day to day life maintaining and sustaining those connections became too difficult with the abruptness of shelter in place and resurgence of civil rights violations, these past few months have pushed the Black families in this study to reconnect. Makeda, stated that this time made them realize that “we’ve had to rely on each other.”

Aminatu recalled stories of talking and reaching out to neighbors and community members to share resources and make connections.

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I've become the diaper lady; I have a friend that had a connection to free diapers. She asked if I knew people who needed them; I made some calls and now I'll get neighbors knocking on my door asking me for diapers.

(Aminatu, 2020)

The participants' experiences and narratives highlight that during times of crisis and uncertainty Black families and communities respond by building, maintaining and sustaining community connections. In addition to community support, Makeda, Nandi and Kandake, responded by naming the family support they sought out at this time. They reported that leaning on support from older siblings and grandparents has helped ease some of the stress and burdens. Makeda stated, "My kids' grandma takes them every other weekend just to give me a break and it helps a lot." The data illustrated that with shelter in place orders and distance learning **some** Black Families were using family connection to get the support needed at this time.

Isolations

The participants' responses to feelings of isolation varied. The conversation about isolations brought up internal feelings of the participants. It wasn't how they were cut out or excluded from anything but how they personally felt or processed their grief in this moment. Nandi named that, "Being a single black mother right now has been a struggle". Nandi was a parent who before the pandemic had a tight schedule for herself and her children. She was very active in school, attending field trips, was a room parent, supported the educators in the classroom and with school programming in addition to working graveyard shifts to provide for her daughters. When shelter in place order began along with distance learning, Nandi quickly readjusted her schedule to meet the new needs of her family. She quit her graveyard shift and began caring for her 1 year old

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grandson so that her older daughter could continue her career goals. Nandi on to say that this was “devastating, we had a schedule laid out, it was a struggle to rebuild it”. Rebuilding a schedule that took years to build and perfect due to reasons that were out of her control took a level of shock, anger, and acceptance.

Others named that the struggle was redefining the work life balance. When asked how the participants were experiencing isolations at this time, all of the participants spoke about the role of motherhood, and providers shifted at this. Moremi stated,

It's hard to find the new work life balance. My son wants me home with him, helping him with distance learning but I have to be at the learning hub helping other people kids so that I can pay bills. He understands but he's not happy about it...neither am I. (Moremi. 2020)

When asked if there is support from her job or guidance surrounding how to provide balance work demands and life responsibilities in during the pandemic, Moremi stated, “they (her supervisors) are very understanding but what can they do, I’m just figuring it out right now.” Another participant, Makeda said, “They (the government) have no idea what’s like to suffer with something that you had nothing to do with”. Both Makeda and Moremi’s narratives highlight that outside factors and decision makers, such as policy makers and government officials, have imposed new ways of living and those ways have affected their Black family’s day to day lives. These new ways of living are only hard but unfair to have to navigate alone. These data points highlighted that Black families, in particular, Black moms were experiencing the demands of shelter in place orders and distance learning that led to an overwhelming feeling of loneliness because they are navigating without support and grief because of the abrupt loss of the way things were

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without support of how to reach the new lift. The new lift of shelter in place has further isolated a population of people who are already pushed to the outer rings of society.

Sense of Self

In regards to feelings of empowerment, the participants discussed experiences of self-perceptions at this time. The respondents had narratives that illuminated their experiences in two categories: those who were overwhelmed and those who found meaning in the chaos. Nandi named that at this time nothing she was doing at this time felt empowering. She stated, “I have no job, children to feed and still haven’t received my stimulus.” Nandi’s focus at the time was survival and maintenance. Kandake, Moremi, and Makeda all named that the weight of being parent, partner, provider, and employee during a pandemic was a lot to bear. Makeda stated,

I had emotional breakdown breakdowns doing it (caring for kids) like it's very overwhelming and I think it's more overwhelming when you only have like one or two kids it probably wouldn't be you know it wouldn't feel much of stress but because there's multiple children like it's very stressful so I had a breakdown boohoo crying. (Makeda. 2020)

In contrast to feeling overwhelmed, other respondents named experiences of finding meaning in the midst of the chaos. Makeda, Nandi, and Kandake all shared that once shelter in place orders hit they had to scale back on work hours or completely quit to be able to care for the young children in their home. Many would take this as a devastating blow; instead the participants in this study stayed in the positive of the situation. Kandake said, “I felt empowered when I learned that I am an essential worker and can still provide

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for my family during this crisis.” Another participant, Aminatu, stated that during this time she learned to, “Feel what I’m feeling; you don’t have to be tough all the time no longer afraid to be vulnerable”. Aminatu went on to state that, “Maybe I’m home to make my plans for my future; I have big dreams.” This statement is rooted in a sense of self and understanding of the current state of things. The varied responses to this question articulate that as many similarities and trends come from these shared experiences, there will always be moments where Black Families are unique and multifaceted just like every other family and that their experiences will also mirror that.

In conclusion, the first research question, how did families with black children experience connections, isolations and empowerment during Covid-19? elicited responses that can be organized according to three themes including (a) reconnections (b) isolations and (c) sense of self. The next section presents findings that address research question number two.

Research Question Two: How Did Black Families with Young Children Experience Shelter in Place?

The data gathered in response to the second research question can be organized according to the following themes: (a) family time - affirming, validating and honoring my baby (b) tough conversations. Theme one presents findings related to the shift to the new way of life in Covid and distance learning. Results that illustrate the feelings around having conversations around race and how those conversations are mentally draining are presented under the heading theme two. Finally, theme three presents findings that address how during this time Black families were able to see their children in new ways.

Family Time: Affirming, Validating and Honoring My Baby

The participants shared that being in the house with young children has brought the family together. Moremi named, “This experience brought family together; we talk

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more, do more diy crafts and family tik toks together.” Nandi goes on to say, “I’m closer to my kids. I get to bond with my children and I’m getting to know them; we talk more. The participants' thoughts illuminated that they were able to re-engage with each other because of shelter in place orders. When responding to questions surrounding caring for young children at this time, all the participants smiled, some giggled and the joy in the faces came through. Even in the moments of stress and turmoil of Covid and uprisings, Nandi named the, “highlight of mine is just being with my children.” Aminatu added to this same thought by stating, “I’ve gotten a chance to see more who he (son) is.” Aminatu named, “I would have never had this much time with him(son) without this pandemic. We've (son and participant) developed a tighter bond.” The pandemic created time for families to be together and these Black mamas had time to be and love on their kids.

Tough Conversations

In addition to being in the house due to shelter in place orders, these young Black families had to navigate, discuss, and feel the stories of Breonna Taylor, Ahmad Arbery, George Floyd and countless Black men, women, and children that looked like them, could have been them; some with stories that are eerily similar to encounters and mirrored experiences. The participants had to re-evaluate their experiences and it forced many of them to have explicit conversations about race with their young children. The participants said that the current climate of civil uprising and the resurgence on racial tensions brought up a lot of feelings of anger, disgust, confusion and annoyance for them and their families. When questions surrounding race and the civil uprising, there were eye rolls, heavy sighs and deep breaths before the conversation commenced. Aminatu reported that this time made them, “more aware and speaking up around inequities”.

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Collectively, the participants spoke on personal stories of police encounters and echoed Nandi's feelings: "I felt powerless...it could have very easily been me."

The current racial tensions and civil uprisings brought up old feelings and made the participant reflect on past racial experiences from the conversations the participants have been forced to have with their children to the self-reflections they have had to have with themselves. Makeda illuminated how some Black Families are processing and developing a shared understanding of navigating this current racial climate. Makeda who has with high school aged children named that,

With all this racial stuff going on...I don't think my kids have ever been so limited. I've had to have talks with them about how to go outside and wear their masks and interact with white people. It's a lot and I want them to be able to go outside but also be safe and the way things are I have to tell them to be ready to defend themselves because the police won't. (Makeda.2020)

Makeda went on to say, "This has been the worst year ever" and that, "he (President Trump) made racism real again for me in my lifetime." Because of our nations current events and Black Lives Matter movement, Breonna Taylor's Murder and then grand jury decision the respondents are showing that in the midst of caring for young children more specifically young Black children at this time,

In summary, the second research question, "How did Black families with young children experience shelter in place?" elicited responses that can be organized according to two themes. Theme one presents findings related to the shift to the new way of life in Covid and Distance Learning. Results that illustrate the feelings around having

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conversations around race and how those conversations are mentally draining are presented under the heading theme two.

Research Question Three: How Did They Experience the Allocation of Community Resources in Terms of Education During Covid-19?

The data gathered in response to the third research question can be organized according to the following themes: (a) I figured it out on my own and (b) mental health in a Pandemic. Theme one presents findings related to how Black Families relied on their own resources to get what their needs met. Results that describe how Black Families are re-learning and accessing a new system are presented under the heading theme two.

I Figured it Out on My Own

Black families felt like they had to figure out resources on their own during shelter in place orders. The families felt left to their own devices. Kandake said that there were, “No resources... It's about personal connections I had before the pandemic. Which is fine if you had connections but what about those community members who didn't.” Similarly, Nandi named that resources were picky with who they would help out: “Like you hear people say they have resources and this and that. And then you try them out and it just doesn't work for you.” Makeda, Nandi, Moremi, and Kandake all named in response to research question three that there was not unified support in the allocation of resources. Makeda stated that “I figured it out on my own.” These participants are the primary provider of the household and some stopped working to care for their young children. They are all in survival mode. The respondents' narratives show that they were thinking about how they will survive day to day. Makeda went on to share that during the onset of shelter in place orders,

They cut off my food stamps, I have the kids more than ever and they cut off my food stamps. I had to figure out how to get hold of my worker over the phone. It

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was so many phone calls so many phone calls and it took a while but I finally got through.

When asked how this differed from pre-shelter in place orders, Makeda shared,

I just would have gone to the office and I would have been fixed the same day; this covid stuff slowed everything down, it took weeks and I still had to feed these kids while they figured it out...you learn the new system of how you get those resources yeah it was it was hard at first it was hard because everything was all over the place for everyone you know business is everything so that was very hard.

In the middle of a global pandemic, in the middle of a civil right uprising, in the middle of caring for young children these Black families figured out how to survive it all and navigate resources on their own.

Mental Health in a Pandemic

The idea of Black Families and mental health services is a unique one because it is commonly noted that Black Families tend to stray away from mental health services, however the narratives shared here illuminate a different sentiment. Kandake named that while it took time for resources to adapt but eventually the resources came, there was a need for new types of resources--mental health support and housing.

In the beginning there was very little to no resources. Now there are all kinds of food banks and schools giving out food for those that need it. I'm not sure about any mental health or help with finding a home for people that may need it.

(Kandake. 2020)

Makeda named that shelter in place orders and civil rights uprisings were "mentally taking a toll on me." Nandi contributed to the same thought by naming that she "wanted

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but had little access to mental health support.” These Black mamas named that during the shelter in place orders and distance learning a need for mental health resources arose.

In summary, the third research question, “How did they experience the allocation of community resources in terms of education during covid-19?” elicited responses that can be organized according to two themes. Theme one presents findings related to how Black Families relied on their own resources to get what their needs met. Results that describe how Black Families are naming the need for mental health resources are in theme two.

Research Question Four: How Did Black Families Experience Their Relationships with Teachers During COVID-19?

The data gathered in response to the second research question can be organized according to the following themes: (a) connections around instruction; (b) disconnection from school as community and resource. Theme one presents findings related to how Black families experience the ways in which their students were connected with instructional platforms. Results that illustrate how some Black families felt disconnected from the school community and school resources are presented under the heading theme two.

Connections Around Instruction and Technology

Since shelter in place orders mandated that everyone stay in their home, distance learning such as zoom class sessions became a space where students could spend time daily connecting with the outside world. For many students and their families this became the only consistent contact with people outside of the people they were sheltering with. When answering questions surrounding relationships with teachers and distance learning, Aminatu said she was “having deeper relationships in the community and with teachers”. She named that her and her family heard more from educators during distance learning

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than they did for in-person learning. Kandake went on to say that they enjoyed seeing their children being able to participate, “A highlight would be when the boys were able to see their classmates and teachers and their little faces light up.” Moremi highlighted that the school has created spaces for connections. Moremi went on to discuss how the school supported them with distance learning “... has been great as far as making sure the children have the devices that they need so that they can do their distance learning.” From how to videos, 1-1 tech support and virtual office hours, the school site offered ways for families to get support with the virtual classroom. Moremi felt that the school had supported students in getting the tools they need for distance learning. Makeda stated that educational platforms such as Seesaw, “helped my son, stay more tuned...he felt like a big boy and it gave him a sense of responsibility to go to Zoom class.” Lastly Nandi, named that platforms such as Zoom and Seesaw made her daughter feel “like they are all (classmates) still together.” Nandi illuminated how happy their children were when they were online and with their friends and teachers. These statements highlighted a sense of togetherness and connectedness even at a time of social disconnection.

With the new lift of daily zoom sessions and seesaw posts came a quick need for consistent and reliable technology. Moremi and Nandi both discussed the role of technology in their feelings surrounding distance learning. Even though the school district provided technology to families who requested it, they named that technology was still a big hindrance to distance learning. Moremi stated, “Technology is janky.” Nandi went on to say, “We have had to get two devices from the school and it’s still not working” These statements show that even though the families see and appreciate the

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work being done it is not seamless there were still structural and procedural deficiencies that made this new way of learning difficult.

Disconnection from School as Community and Resource

School culture and community are integral parts of positive learning environments. Moremi named that the reasons they choose the school their child is enrolled in was due to the resources the school provided and those resources were just not available during this virtual distance learning format. “In the beginning it was a struggle...he (Moremi’s son) was getting all the resources I was looking for and it all stopped and now I am seeing the effects of that now.” Although families named that they were closer to their child's educator, Moremi brought up a feeling of isolation from the support staff that helped cultivate the community school model that she sought out pre-covid. Moremi went on to say, “It would be nice to hear from regular staff more, not just teachers.” Moremi’s ask highlights the appreciation she has for the work that classroom educators are doing but also names the connections and partnerships that were built with school staff which have been dissolved due to shelter in place orders and the current distance learning format. Moremi and parents like her realize the extra support of the school support team is just as important as the classroom educator and families are missing those connections at this time.

In summary, the fourth research question, “How did Black families experience their relationships with teachers during COVID-19?” elicited responses that can be organized according to two themes. Theme one presented findings related to how Black families experience the ways in which their students were connected with instructional platforms. Results that illustrate how some Black families felt disconnected from the school community and school resources were presented under the heading theme two.

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Conclusion

The data gathered for this phenomenological study are presented in the sections above. These findings are presented by theme and according to the research questions. The results of the first research question, “How did families with black children experience connections, isolations and empowerment during Covid-19?” are organized by the ways in which Black mothers sought reconnections within the community, felt moments of isolations, and sense of self. The results of the second research question, “How did Black families with young children experience shelter in place?” are organized by how Black families shifted their family’s day-to-day life to new Covid-19 and distance learning parameters and how they had conversations surrounding race and inequities and the mental stressors of our current global situation affected the family. These findings also address how during this time Black Families were able to see their children in new ways. The results of the third question, “How did they experience the allocation of community resources in terms of education during covid-19?” are organized by findings related to how Black families relied on their own resources to get what their needs met and results that describe how Black families are naming the need for mental health resources. Finally, the results of the fourth question, “How did Black families experience their relationships with teachers during COVID-19?” are organized by findings related to how Black families experience the ways in which their students were connected with instructional platforms and results illustrating how some Black families felt disconnected from the school community and school resources. The next chapter presents a discussion of these results, as well as conclusions and recommendations based on the findings presented in this chapter.

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Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

These past few months have been the hardest moments in modern day society, in the course of eight months everything has changed. The way that public school has functioned no longer works. The model that informed how families functioned was abruptly shifted due to Covid-19 and shelter in place orders. As a K/1 teacher who has been teaching for 10 years, I saw first-hand how everything I had known about education and the ways in which school works shifted. As a Black mama of a three-year-old and eight-year-old, I personally saw my toddler's school close their doors and my daughter finish 1st grade and start 2nd grade online with no real idea of when they will be able to enter a school safely. As I navigated this new way of life, I questioned, wondered and discussed; What does this all look and feel like for other parents, other Black families and other Black Mamas? What about the students and families I currently serve? How are they experiencing this and how can my role as an educator, fellow Black mama and graduate student offer a space that not only listens but allows for the thoughts, conversations and experiences of other Black Mamas and families to be uplifted and shared with educational administration, educational policy makers and school districts so that Black Mamas, Black Families and their Black children can feel supported during this time. In my own classroom I saw families who were completely engaged in school and the school community pre-Covid completely disengage from the current roll out of distance learning. From talking to other educators from my school site to across the nation, I learned that this was not just my class. Which left me asking why? What about the current rollout of distance learning led to Black Families disengaging from school? In

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order to truly uplift the experiences of Black families in this current moment, I choose to conduct a phenomenological study. This study consisted of virtual interviews and a survey to explore the lived experiences of Black Families navigating distance learning during the mandatory COVID-19 shelter in place orders. From this phenomenological study I was able to have five conversations with Black mamas raising young children during shelter in place orders, due to a global pandemic. In the midst of this pandemic these Black Mamas, their families and their children not only navigated distance learning but also were thrown into the middle of civil rights uprisings. By listening to the stories and experiences of these Black Mamas, Aminatu, Makeda, Nandi, Moremi, and Kandake, I was able to highlight the ways in which their families were not only adapting to the changing times but redefining the lives and the ways in which they live their lives with their young children.

This chapter includes sections titled (a) discussion (b) conclusions (c) recommendations. In the discussion section, the evidence presented in chapter three is explored. The discussion is organized by research questions and includes a discussion of each theme presented in Chapter Four. The conclusion section presents conclusions based on the results of my study. It also relates my findings back to the body of literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The conclusion section is organized according to the themes used in Chapter Two. The final section of this chapter includes evidence-based recommendations related to (a) educational practices and actions that may be taken based on the study results and my conclusions (b) future research studies that may be carried out to advance the work begun in this investigation. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

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Discussion

In this section the evidence presented in Chapter Four is discussed. The discussion is organized according to the research questions that guided this study:

- How did families with black children experience connections, isolations and empowerment during Covid-19?
- How did Black families with young children experience shelter in place?
- How did they experience the allocation of community resources in terms of education during covid-19?
- How did Black families experience their relationships with teachers during COVID-19?

In the first research question, the Black mamas in this study named that at this time they were reconnecting with others in the community, navigating feelings of loneliness and grief for the way things were pre-Covid, and that they had time and opportunity to reconnect with themselves. In research question two the stories of the Black Mamas named that during shelter in place orders their families had more family time where they could affirm, validate and honor their children and were able to have tough conversations surrounding race. In the third research question, the Mamas shared that they found ways to navigate community resources on their own and their desire for and lack of mental health resources at this time. Finally, in research question four, families named that schools and teachers provided connections through instruction and disconnect between home and school community/ resources during shelter in place orders.

Research Question One: How Did Families with Black Children Experience Connections, Isolations and Empowerment During Covid-19?***Reconnections***

The research aimed to explore how Black Families are experiencing the ways in which they connected with others during this time. An overwhelming response highlighted that Black families saw this time as a way to reconnect with community as well as family members. The participants' experiences and narratives highlighted that during times of crisis and uncertainty Black families and communities responded by building, maintaining and sustaining community connections. By reaching out to each other and sharing not only experiences but resources with each other, Black families were able to re-engage with one another. For example, Aminatu said that the “communal feel of the community was coming back.” These findings articulate that Black families are still working together even in times of crisis which confirms research that suggests Black families tends to emphasize the use of social forums, such as community organizations, churches, committees and referrals as places for sharing information (Louque & Latunde, 2014).

Isolations

A major finding in regards to the isolations that the Black Families named were that their feelings surrounding isolations were self-imposed. The respondents named how they felt isolated; not whether they were excluded from spaces. Feelings of keeping it all together for the family came through in many of the interviews. In terms of the overall research this finding illuminates some of the internal struggles that Black families; in particular Black mothers, are battling. These mamas are trying to keep their families happy, healthy and safe and that is hard to do when feeling that you are doing it alone.

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When comparing the themes of reconnections and isolations, one can see where the Black Mamas are making reconnections and sharing resources so that their families' needs are met during this crisis. However, the Black mamas do not name these same spaces they re-built during this time as a space where they could process their own grief of loss of the ways things were, let alone as a space to discuss their feelings of loneliness. They are helping others but they haven't been able to help themselves yet. These findings confirm the existing literature which names that Black women develop strategies of survival and resistance and share those strategies in the Black Community, however the work of Black women is to face oneself and her wants and needs. (hooks. 1994)

Sense of Self

A key finding in regards to self-perception were the feelings of being overwhelmed and navigation of life in the midst of the chaos. Some Mamas, such as Kandake, named that a highlight was being able to care for their young children at this time. Being able to find ways to keep their children happy, healthy and safe during shelter in place orders, gave the participants a sense of pride, fulfillment and empowerment needed to keep going. The stories shared by the participants highlighted that even in the midst of all of these historic changes that being able to provide is still the same motivator for these families and being able to do that for these past few months had been a bright spot in their lives. Other Black mamas such as Nandi and Makeda said that this time was overwhelming. The stories shared by these participants illuminated that this new lift was challenging and at times felt to be too much.

Related to this, the existing literature demonstrates that historically, Black families and their children feel isolated in traditional school settings. (Brandon. 2005) In order to get their students' academic needs met, a lot of Black Families reach out to their

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surrounding community to provide enrichment activities that also celebrate their Blackness such as after school programs, museums, the theater, or other cultural organizations (Louque & Latunde, 2016). The findings from my study extend the existing literature by demonstrating what happens when black families and their young children lose those authentic connections and community partnerships that schools build.

When schools were abruptly closed due to shelter-in-place orders, families reported moments of isolation, moments of rebuilding their family structure but also moments of re-engaging with their community, seeking out relationships with people they hadn't had relationships with many years before. This time also brought feelings of reconnection, feelings of isolation and varying levels of sense of self. The Black Mamas who shared their experiences were able to still provide for their families even in the midst of a global pandemic and civil rights uprising and were learning that that their village had their back while they were doing it.

Research Question Two: How Did Black Families with Young Children Experience Shelter in Place?

Family Time: Affirming Validating and Honoring My Baby

Existing research names that Black families engage in their children's education in two major ways; by helping them learn at home and exposing them to educational activities outside of the home (Latunde & Louque, 2016). A major finding in the responses to the questions surrounding experiencing shelter in place order with young children was family time and values. Black families reported a feeling of re-engagement of family values, mostly because they were able to spend more time together. My findings build on this research by demonstrating Black Mamas in the study engaged by sharing moments of joy and excitement. Black families had the opportunity to

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acknowledge the brilliance of their young Black child. Participants said that they got a chance to see and connect with their young children. Shelter in place orders mandated that families stay in the house. Even when heading out, families could only do activities with those you lived with. This was a complete shift in some of the respondents pre-covid schedule where the children would be at school six to eight hours a day, came home, and went to bed at a reasonable time to do it all over again Monday through Friday. They were all home to just be.

The existing literature suggests families' work schedules, beliefs surrounding distance learning, and their ability to become their child's distance educator all play a part in the way that students will show up for distance learning (Makarewicz, 2013). The findings from my study build on Marakewicz's findings by illustrating the specific ways Black mamas support their children in showing up for distance learning. These Black Mamas named how hard it was to switch work schedules and yet described how rewarding it was to become the distance learning educator. However, they noted that without the support of their school or community, they would not be able to show up for their young children right now. And in spite of all of these things, they still showed up.

Tough Conversations

Another key finding of research question two was the conversation that Black families had to have with young children during this time due to the civil uprising and racial tensions. They highlighted how some of the Black Mamas in the study had to re-evaluate some of their past experiences with race relations and personal interactions with the police, they also had to have tough conversations with their children about what it is like to navigate life as a Black person. Existing research uses the concept of fund of knowledge to highlight that people are competent and have knowledge, and their life

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experiences have given them that knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti. 2005). My findings confirm the existing literature by showing how these moms referenced their own personal experiences to help inform their families and not only began to have tough conversations about race but also to teach their young children the unfortunate realities of the world.

Research Question Three: How Did They Experience the Allocation of Community Resources in Terms of Education During Covid-19?

I Figured it Out on My Own

Findings from question three highlighted a narrative of persistence. In the midst of a pandemic and civil rights resurgence, Black families are finding ways to not only survive but to connect with family and community so that all stakeholders can thrive. This theme was important to the study because it showed the other impact that school systems have on Black families. Schools are not just picked because of the academics or school resources but they are chosen because of how a school connects families to who they want to be connected to. When schools were shut down due to shelter in place orders, the ways in which are Black families connected with each other was also immediately shut down. Existing research highlighted that positive school home connections are only cultivated through proactive plans that Black parents, the school and the community must build together. (Brandon. 2007) My findings extend the research by highlighting that during these shelters in place orders families had to rebuild a community without their community hub--the school. Over the course of these few months these participants highlighted how Black families came together, reached out to one another and are rebuilding communities together.

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Mental Health in a Pandemic

Due to the shelter in place orders, civil uprisings, and distance learning, Black Families named that mental health services were wanted and needed because the participants and their children were coping at the same time. The parents were trying to hold it down and not fall apart. Once the immediate needs of housing and food for the family were met; the participants wanted time to reach back and reflect on the pain, joy, humor and anger of the moment and felt that therapy would be an entry point to healing. Existing research tends to highlight the negative stigma in the Black community surrounding mental health (Baoku, 2018). My findings challenge this research. The Black Mamas who participated in this study named that they and their children may benefit from mental health resources but also were actively seeking out mental health support.

Research Question Four:-How Did Black Families Experience their Relationships with Teachers During COVID-19?

Connections Around Instruction and Technology

During this time the Black Mamas in this study named that they were very happy to see that the school and their child's educator were really trying to build connections through the distance learning format. Even though technology wasn't always reliable, the moms saw the steps that the school district, school, and educators were making to attempt to make distance learning successful. Nandi, named that platforms such as Zoom and Seesaw make her daughter feel "like they are all (classmates) still together." Nandi illuminated how happy their children were when they were online and with their friends and teachers. These statements highlighted a sense of togetherness and connectedness even at a time of social disconnection. Existing literature names that in order to educate in the online learning community, educators must offer access, flexibility, practice, communication, and an educational environment (Parkes, Gregory, Adlington, &

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Gromik, 2015). My findings extend this research by showing that during times of crisis-based distance learning such as shelter in place orders and civil right uprisings, Black families named that not only the above mentioned things support connections but the sense of togetherness and connectedness supported this experience.

Disconnection from School as Community and Resources

Another major finding was that Black moms in this study named the need for interaction from the other educators and staff members in the school. A big part of the school community is the blend of all stakeholders not just the educator and the students' family. Covid-19, shelter in place orders and distance learning stopped all school gatherings and ways to connect which led to disconnections from the school community. Existing literature names that parents' isolation from school stems from lack of connection with the school or educators at the school (Brandon, 2007) My findings extend the literature because the experience of Moremi demonstrates the loss that can occur after connection has been made. Because of crisis based distance learning, Black families could experience disconnection from school, community, and resources provided by the school. Moremi describes how in pre-Covid the school found ways to connect and partner with her and her family but after shelter in place orders commenced, Moremi felt that all resources and connectedness halted.

Conclusions

Key takeaways from this study is that the Black mamas who participated in this study experienced moments of reconnection and isolation at the same time. Their children's school built strong partnerships pre-covid, but failed to maintain and sustain those partnerships and accessibility to resources such as food support and mental health resources. The Black mamas who participated in this study were finding ways to engage

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and interact with their children, have conversations and experiences rooted in their own cultural experiences. But if school systems do not find a way to re-engage and reconnect with Black Families in this new distance learning format, the disconnect will only be exacerbated and rates of disengagement will rise.

Recommendations

In this section, I make evidence-based recommendations for educational practices and actions related to how to uplift the stories shared by Black families so that re-engagement for young Black children can occur in the distance learning format under current shelter in place orders. I also make recommendations for future research on how to uplift and recognize the other voices that have been historically silenced when conversations of education are taking place.

Recommendations for educational practices and actions include (a) creating spaces for Black families to share and be in community with others, (b) developing spaces/ways to engage with families that support transforming the power from the institution to the families they serve, (c) maintaining connections with school community and (d) professional development for educators surrounding building authentic partnerships during distance learning.

Recommendations for future research include (a) research including the stories of families with older children; ages 8 and up this study focused on Black Families with young children ages 1- 7. (b) research that would explore more intensively the impact of race played in the allocation of resources (c) research that would explore the lived experiences of educators and learning hub providers with providing an educational

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experience at this time. Following this, the chapter ends with a brief conclusion of this thesis as a whole.

Recommendations Based on the Findings of This Study

Recommendations for educational practices and actions include (a) creating spaces for Black families to share and be in community with others, (b) using those spaces to transform the power from the institution to the families they serve, (c) maintaining connections with school community, and (d) professional development for educators surrounding building authentic partnerships during distance learning.

Related to creating spaces for Black families to share and be in community with others, I recommend that school systems create working groups where Black families can consistently come share moments of gratitude, resistance and struggle with other Black families to build a space of community and partnership. My findings suggest that if school systems and educators want to re-engage Black families with distance learning, they must find ways and spaces that allow for educators and Black families to have time and opportunity to build that relational and authentic trust. One way to do that is by finding ways to highlight, recognize, uplift and celebrate the ways in which Black families are showing up for their children at this time. Uplifting the voices of the respondents, school systems must implement distance learning approaches that celebrate the connectedness that families have gained during this time and find ways to incorporate those reinvigorated values and ways of togetherness Black families established during shelter in place orders in the distance learning format.

Similarly, related to developing those spaces to transform the power from the institution to the families they serve, I recommend that these same school systems use the conversations and the topics that come up in these working groups to plan curriculum and

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policy and school governing protocols that highlight the truths of these Black families and find ways to integrate those moments of gratitude, resistance, and struggle into the curriculum that is being adopted into the distance learning format that young Black children are currently navigating. My findings suggest that in order for distance learning to be successful the instructional design of distance learning must be co-constructed based on the authentic conversations between Black families, educators, and school systems. School systems must acknowledge the role that they historically played in isolating Black families so that they will be able to start a conversation of rebuilding and including Black families so that Black families can create a virtual school experience that celebrates their Black brilliance and meets their young Black children's academic needs. Historically in public school settings Black families have felt isolated and Black families have felt pushed out. By putting the stories and narratives of Black Families at the center in the middle of the pandemic and civil rights uprising, Black families will be empowered to name what they want and how they want to be served. Instead of having to deal with whatever is given, Black families will finally feel seen and heard and uplifted. This is important because by placing Black families at the center of instructional design and partnerships school systems will be giving voice to the voiceless.

Related to maintaining connections between Black families and the school community, I recommend that school systems must creatively find ways that they rebuild and sustain the community virtually or at least in the socially distanced format. The experiences shared by the Black families in this study showed that families wanted opportunities to connect with the whole school community, not just their child's educator or learning hub provider. If school systems want to keep Black families and their students

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engaged in distance learning during shelter in place orders due to Covid-19, they have to think of how the role of virtual/ distance learning school could support or advocate for cultural community hubs during shelter in place orders. Schools such as the school highlighted in this study are unofficial community hubs, a place where non-profits reach out to families, where families get healthcare, food, and clothing services in addition to the education that their child's educators provide.

Finally, related to professional development for educators surrounding building authentic partnerships during distance learning, I recommend that school systems find ways to prepare their educators to really do this work by providing professional development in the form of webinars, trainings, and discussion groups on how to build authentic partnerships during shelter in place orders or distance learning. By thinking critically and using a critical pedagogy lens, school systems should engage with Black families in ways that would empower Black families to rebuild school systems that are rooted in the engagement of Black families and their young children. School systems must acknowledge the role that they historically played in isolating Black Families so that they will be able to start a conversation of rebuilding and including Black families into that new structure and landscape of the new classroom, the new public-school classroom, the new traditional classroom. School systems must be ready to unpack some of the white supremacist or racist foundations the institution of education is built on. By dismantling and rebuilding some of the systems, parents of young Black children can fully engage in the conversation with their child knowing that they have back-up or partnership with their chosen school system and their child's educator to provide them with an authentic view of our very complex society. Giving educators ways to analyze

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and reflect grade level curriculum and standards so that they can not only plan but support students and families continue learning in the midst of a pandemic. By intentionally building relationships with families virtually so that they know their child's educator is truly committed and invested in teaching their young child.

In addition to these recommendations, the following section described an additional set of recommendations, for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research include (a) research including the stories of families with older children ages 8 and up because this study focused on Black Families with young children ages 1- 7, (b) research that would explore more intensively the impact of race played in the allocation of resources, and (c) research that would explore the lived experiences of educators and learning hub providers with providing an educational experience at this time.

Related to research including the stories of families with children older than 8, I recommend that future researchers take time to explore the lived experiences of Black families who are caring for older children. Since their children are closer to adulthood the conversations, the decisions that these Black families make could be different than those families who have younger children and feel that they have more time to expose them and show them how to navigate the truths of our society.

I would also recommend that future researchers explore more intensively the allocations of resources during shelter in place orders and how those resources were distributed based on race, class and gender in a geographical region. If one's immediate needs are not met due to one of those social constructs, the ways that they show up in institutions such as public education could vary tremendously.

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Finally, related to research that would explore the lived experiences of educators and learning hub providers with providing an educational experience at this time., I recommend that future researchers explore the various ways in which students engage in distance learning through the lens of classroom educators and learning hub providers. These types of research may add to the existing literature by highlighting the voices of all stakeholders and using those voices to push the status quo and transform power from the oppressor to the oppressed. This is when and where fundamental shifts will take place and true equitable educational practices can be made.

Final Conclusions

Through uplifting the voices of Black families in this phenomenological study, a deeper awareness of Black Families innate ability to adapt during times of crisis was presented. By bringing Black Families voices into the room, education policy makers, teachers, and practitioners could shift the approach of distance learning from one of a top down approach to a collective meeting and exchange of the minds. This shift would lead towards equitable transference of power from an institution to the people it currently serves.

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Appendix A IRB Application

Project Title:

Our story: A phenomenological study of Black families with young children navigating distance learning during COVID-19

1. RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

1. Purpose

1. The aim of this thesis is to engage in a phenomenology inquiry that will explore the lived experiences of Black families with young children, who are navigating distance learning during the mandatory COVID-19 shelter-in-place. Through the lens of CRT and Critical Pedagogy this inquiry seeks to understand the lived experiences, perceptions and concerns that Black families are facing during this new era of mandated distance learning. Because Black families voices are historically undervalued and silenced in formal and public institutions of education, this work seeks to acknowledge and amplify their voices. This study will be conducted among parents who have children enrolled at a K-5 elementary school in an historically Black neighborhood in a medium-sized city in California . The intended outcome is to name the lived realities that Black families are facing during COVID-19, and to understand the role that distance learning is playing in that lived experience.

b. Background

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US, each state, county and school was tasked with finding ways to teach students virtually. From my experience as a public school educator, I know that cities with big school districts like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland and a host of others, this meant spending the first weeks of distance learning making sure families had devices and connectivity to be able to participate in distance learning. For example, according to the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) website, SFUSD distributed 5,200 devices to students in grade 3-12 and Pre-k- 2grade students were provided with distance learning packets (via pick up or mail out) to support distance learning during county shelter in place orders.

While districts like SFUSD were credited in supporting families swiftly and effectively, anecdotal evidence suggests that Black students and their families were not participating in distance learning as much as their white counterparts (Goldstein, Popescu, & Hannah-Jones, 2020). According to Parkes, M., Gregory, S., Fletcher, P., Adlington, R., & Gromik, N., (2015) distance learning exacerbates the racial and social inequities that public education institutions perpetuate. Research from this time demonstrates that some Black families who were engaged in the

school pre-COVID-19, became somewhat disengaged from school during distance learning; other Black families, who had limited engagement with their children's schools pre-COVID-19, cut all communication with schools (Brown & Brandon, (2007) and Latunde, Y., & Clark-Louque, A. (2016)

In order to understand both why Black families are disengaging from school during COVID-19, and how to remedy this, it is important to understand that (a) students benefit from culturally responsive instructional design when in distance learning; (b) Black students have higher rates of academic achievement when their families have authentic connections with schools and community partnerships; (c) student school engagement during distance learning is affected by factors such as family work schedules, financial obligations, and the capacity of the parent to serve as a teacher. For example, even though most educators and instructional designers view culturally responsive design as important, it is not often taken into account when designing online curriculum.(Woodley et al., 2017). In summary, when educators take culture into account during distance learning, they tend to do so at a surface level (Alalshaikh, 2015; Uzner, 2009). This is important to understand because the use of culturally relevant pedagogy is one strategy for building authentic connections between schools and families.

Related to this, research demonstrates that Black students whose families have authentic connections with schools and community partnerships have higher rates of academic achievement (Cousins & Mickelson, 2011). In traditional school settings, Black parents often feel isolated and turn to community resources for educational support and guidance (Louque et al., 2017). During distance learning feelings of isolation can be exacerbated and with county and state shelter in place orders, community resources may also be limited causing negative effects on Black families and students during distance learning. Student engagement is directly affected by this isolation and by other external factors such as family work schedules, financial obligations, and the capacity of the parent to serve as a teacher (Curie-Rubin & Smith, 2014). As external factors are amplified due to the pandemic and social unrest, the ability of many Black families to support their children during distance learning may become compromised; this in turn may negatively affect student engagement during distance learning (White, 2020). For these reasons, during times of crisis-based distance learning, Black families may benefit from culturally responsive instructional designs that foster relationships and student engagement. However, these specific tools do not yet exist.

A review of the literature revealed that the experiences of Black families and students during distance learning has yet to be explored. As mentioned above, the background literature for this study includes research on the topics of (a) the benefits of culturally responsive instructional design during distance learning; (b) Black families and authentic school connections; (c) student school engagement. While these areas together can lead to an understanding of how to engage and support Black families, there was no comprehensive piece of research that spoke to the experiences of Black families during COVID-19. There is a need for research that addresses this and the ways in which schools might support Black families during distance learning. The research related to this topic indicates that the inequalities that Black families and students faced in traditional school settings are being exacerbated during distance learning. This, as well as the gap in the literature on Black family experiences, articulates the need for this study.

c. Research plan;

- i. The methodology I plan to use to address this problem is a phenomenological study exploring the lived experiences of Black families with young children during the mandatory shelter-in-place and distance learning prompted by COVI-19. Since my aim is to uplift and highlight the voices of Black families in this particular point of time I sought a methodology that allowed for explorative research and according to Spiegelberg (1965), “The phenomenological method is grounded in the belief that truth can be found in lived experience” (p.x). By exploring the lived experiences of these families, my aim is to understand their truth and to provide them with a formal opportunity to articulate how education looks, feels and sounds like during the current pandemic.
- ii. Groenewald (2004) provides an overview for phenomenological research and named that this approach allows for research methods that include interviews and field notes. Due to the mandatory shelter-in-place, I will make use of only interviews. Through these interviews, I will work to understand the lived experiences of Black families with young children. In addition to interviews LeVasseur(2003) defines the technique of bracketing in phenomenology. LeVasseur identified the notion of “persistent curiosity” through which the researcher understands that their assumptions and biases may jumpstart their initial curiosity but must be set back in order to allow the interviews and field notes to

lead the research to a new understanding (p. 419). During the research process, I will lean on my persistent curiosity about Black families and make every effort to bracket my own experiences as a Black mother and educator. The topic of life during the pandemic is complex and multi-layered, and the narratives that the families share will allow for new understanding. It is my hope that this study will “show how our words, concepts and theories shape and give structure to our experiences as we live them.” (Adams & van Manen, 2008. 4).

- iii. The data collection methods for this phenomenology of Black Families and COVID-19 will include interviews. Prior to being interviewed, participants will be given copies of the Participants Rights, as well as a consent form and an interview protocol. Interviews will be used to allow the community members to share their stories. They will share their truth by having a conversation, and the use of three or four prompts will be to start the conversation and re-engage if the community member/researcher conversation becomes stagnant. Interviews will be used to ask follow up questions to find commonalities and trends between community members. According to Creswell, (2006), these methods are appropriate choices for a phenomenological study because the aim of phenomenology is to explore the lived experiences of individuals during a particular phenomenon and one way to do that is to have conversations where community members can share their conscious experiences.
- iv. In terms of data analysis, the data will be organized and prepared by transcribing the recordings of the stories of the community members. After that, the researcher will review the data in order to pull out the pertinent experiences that are related to the research questions. The researcher will then explicate the data in order to generate themes. Finally, the researcher will share the evidence, organized by theme, with the participants in order to make sure that their stories are being uplifted and framed in a way that authentic their lived experiences. This will be done in order to establish the validity of the findings.

d. Setting

Due to shelter in place orders the study will take place virtually through Zoom. Interviews will be scheduled based on the availability of the participants. Due to the nature of zoom and video conferencing the actual location of the participant during the interview will vary. The researcher will conduct the interviews from her home office, as the city remains under a mandatory shelter-in-place.

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e. Timing

1. The study will last for 5 months, August 17, 2020 through December 5, 2020 or until all participants are interviewed, whichever happens quicker. There will be a total of three sessions on zoom
 1. One 30-45min dialogue with four prompts
 2. One 30-45 interview with follow up questions
 3. One meeting where transcriptions are shared to discuss the accuracy of the community members narratives

1. PARTICIPANTS

a. Participant Population and Recruitment

- i. The sampling procedure used by the researcher will be a purposive sampling. The participants will be parents and guardians, over the age of 18, recruited from the larger population of families at the school where the researcher is a teacher. Participants will be recruited by placing an announcement in the school's weekly newsletter as well as the through school social media accounts. Parents and guardians interested in participating will be given a copy of the Participants Rights, as well as a consent form and an interview protocol (see attached)
- ii. The school population from which the participants will be recruited is an urban K-5 public elementary school located in an historically Black neighborhood, in a medium-sized city in Northern California. At this school, 82 % of students at the school qualified for free lunch, 7.3 % of the student body were identified English Language Learners, and 14.6 % of students were identified as special needs students. In addition, 43% of students identify as Black; 20.5% declined to state a racial identity category; 15.9% of students identify as Pacific Islander; 13.9% identify as Latinx; 4% identify as multi-racial; 2% identify as Asian; and .7% of the students identify as Native Peoples. The school has X classrooms, X children, and X teachers. The researcher is a teacher at this school.

1.

a. Participant Risks and Benefits

1. While there are no benefits to the participants in this study, results may help practitioners and researchers better understand Black families experiences surrounding COVID-19 and it will give participants the opportunity to have their voices heard.
2. There is minimal risk associated with participation in this study; however, if participants feel uncomfortable with a question they may skip it. I will also share contact information with the school site social worker to resources in the community with mental health resources. Likewise, if they experience fatigue, they will be encouraged to take a short break.

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b. Participant Compensation and Costs

1. Participants will not be compensated in any forms for the study.
2. There will be no cost associated with the study as zoom is a free resource that the researcher has access to since being enrolled as a graduate student at USF and transcription and analysis will be done using the tool embedded in zoom and by hand by the researcher.

1. CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA SECURITY

a. The participants will be informed that all individual information will be protected. For example, all participants will be assigned pseudonym and contact information will be stored in a separate location than the interview recordings. No personal information will be collected other than basic contact information. The online video conferencing system (Zoom) will not save IP address or other identifying information. Data will be kept on a password protected computer and destroyed three years after completion of the research. No data will be collected from community members who choose to 'opt out' during the research process; their data will be immediately destroyed. No names will be associated with any data resulting from this study. No one will have access to the data but the researcher and the thesis advisor. Participants will be made aware that while there are no benefits to the participants in this study, results may help practitioners and researchers better understand Black families experiences related to COVID-19 and it will give participants the opportunity to have their voices heard. There is minimal risk associated with participation in this study; however, if community members feel uncomfortable with a question they may skip it. Likewise, if they experience fatigue or experience an emotional trigger, they will be encouraged to take a short break and return to the interview at a later time.

1. CONSENT

a. Participants will be engaged in the process of informed consent by presenting the informed content to participants at the beginning of the onboarding process. The potential participants will indicate they have read the consent form and agree to participate by completing and emailing the forms to the researcher before the zoom interview date. Those who do not consent to the study will not continue to participate. Those who give their consent to participate will be informed of the study procedures when scheduling the interview session, and will be allowed to ask questions at that time and throughout the study process.

Upload to the online IRB system the consent form(s) that the participants and/or parent/guardian will be required to sign, and the assent forms for children under the age of 18, if applicable.

Note: All consent forms must contain the following elements (quoted directly from Office for Human Research Protections regulations, available at: <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm#46.116>. The University

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of San Francisco IRB has consent templates containing all required elements, and we strongly recommend you use these templates.

If you believe it is important to create your own consent form, you are free to do so but please ensure that your consent form has each of the following elements and indicate you have done so by checking this box:

I have chosen to create my own consent form and have ensured that it contains the 8 essential elements listed below:

- (1a) A statement that the study involves research, (1b) an explanation of the purposes of the research, (1c) the expected duration of the subject's participation, (1d) a description of the procedures to be followed, and (1e) identification of any procedures which are experimental;
- (2) A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject;
- (3) A description of any benefits to the subject or to others which may reasonably be expected from the research;
- (4) A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject;
- (5) A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained;
- (6) For research involving more than minimal risk, an explanation as to whether any compensation and an explanation as to whether any medical treatments are available if injury occurs and, if so, what they consist of, or where further information may be obtained;
- (7) An explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject; and
- (8) A statement that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled."

Will the only record linking the participant and the research be the consent document and the principal risk to the participant would be from breach of confidentiality? **Yes** No

Do you consider this a minimal risk study that involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of research (see 2B above for definition)? **Yes** No

Explain why you are requesting waiver or modification of documentation of written (signed) informed consent and how you plan to obtain consent.

4c. Waiver or modification of informed consent (Complete only if answered "no" to 4a)

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The regulations also provide an opportunity for the IRB to waive the requirement for informed consent or to modify the informed consent process, provided the protocol meets the following criteria:

(1) The research involves no more than minimal risk to subjects (see 2b above for definition); (2) The waiver of alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects; (3) The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration; and (4) Whenever appropriate, the subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information after participation.

If you are requesting a waiver or modification of informed consent (e.g., incomplete disclosure, deception), explain how your project meets the requirements for waiver or modification of informed consent, as outlined above.

(Rev 1.25.18)

Appendix B- Consent Form for Adults

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. You should read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, you will sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information on this consent form. You are entitled to and will receive a copy of this form. You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Devalin Jackson, a graduate student in the Department of Organization and Leadership at University of San Francisco. This faculty supervisor for this study is Seenae Choung, a professor in the Department of Organization and Leadership at University of San Francisco.

WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT: The purpose of this research study is to understand the lived experiences of Black Families during Covid and the role that education played in this.

YOU TO DO: During this study, the following will happen; We will set a schedule to talk (through zoom) When we meet virtually to talk we will meet at the agreed upon time and have a conversation. I'll have a few talking points but the space will be primarily for you to talk and me to listen. Once our conversation is done we will discuss next steps and where I am in the study process. I may come back with follow up questions. Once our conversation is transcribed (written out) I will provide you with a copy for your records. Once all the conversations with all community members are finished I will look for trends or commonalities in your experiences and discuss that in my findings. Once the study is finished I will send you a finished copy for your records.

DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY: Your participation in this study will involve three sessions that lasts 30- 45 minutes. These sessions will consist of one dialogue, one interview and one meeting sharing the findings of the research. The study will take place virtually through Zoom.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS: The research procedures described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: Time Constraints and Technological Difficulties. During this time, it is hard to make time to do anything alone so I acknowledge that it will take planning and family support to carve time to be a part of this research. Technology is not always reliable especially with everyone online at the same time, I know that it can be frustrating at times. If you wish, you may choose to

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withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the study without penalty.

BENEFITS: You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study; however, by contributing to the study you will be giving researchers and practitioners the ability to understand the experiences you have so that they can begin to design ways to uplift and support Black families. Giving Black families a voice in an Academic setting where historically that voice has been silenced. And lastly giving future generations a first-person historical account of the lived experiences of Black families at this time.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY: Any data you provide in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In any report we publish, we will not include information that will make it possible to identify you or any individual participant. Specifically, we will ensure that all Individual information will be protected in all data resulting from this study. I will put participants in pseudonyms once confidentiality agreements are set. All information will be stored in a separate location than the recordings. No personal information will be collected other than basic contact information. The online video conferencing system (Zoom) will not save IP address or other identifying information. Data will be kept on a password protected computer, destroyed three years after completion of the research. No data will be collected from participants who choose to 'opt out' during the research process; their data will be immediately destroyed. No names will be associated with any data resulting from this study. No one will have access to the data but me and my thesis advisor.

COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION: There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY: Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time. In addition, the researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:

Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you should contact the principal investigator: (Seenae Choung) at (srchong@usfca.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at IRBPHS@usfca.edu. **I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.**

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE DATE

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ADDITIONAL
ITEMS TO NOTE:

EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENTS: When appropriate, be sure to explicitly identify any procedures that are experimental and disclose appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject;

GREATER THAN MINIMAL RISK STUDIES: For research involving more than minimal risk, include an explanation as to whether any compensation or medical treatments are available if injury occurs and, if so, what they consist of, or where further information may be obtained. In addition, explicitly note who to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject.

VIDEO AND AUDIO RECORDINGS: For studies in which audio or video recording of participants are to be made, the consent form should include information as to why the recordings are needed for the research, where and how they will be stored and identified, and what will be done with them upon completion of the research (e.g., archived after transcription,)

Appendix C- Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. As a reminder, you signed a consent form that explained (a) this study is about... (b) by participating, you have agreed to... (c) your participation will take place at/on... and (the interview) will last approximately... (d) potential risks and benefits include... (e) I will maintain your privacy by... (f) your participation is voluntary, you may refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable, and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

To facilitate note-taking, I would like to audio/video record our conversations today. For your information, only my advisor and I will have access to these recordings, which will be destroyed after they are transcribed.

You have selected to speak with me today because you identify as someone who... This is relevant to my study because...

Interview question: Please share your experience of COVID-19 as a parent of a small child.

Things to think about:

- What was/is it like caring for a young child during shelter in place orders?
- Can you tell me an example of when you felt empowered during this time
- What was it like when shelter in place orders came?
- Can you tell me an example of how you maintained or built relationships/community during covid-19/shelter in places orders?
- What was it like finishing the school year at home? Can you tell me an example of the conversations you had with your child's educator or school?
- What do you do to stay connected with others in your community/network during covid-19 shelter in place orders?

Appendix D Advertisement for Recruitment

Are you a parent/caregiver of an enrolled student at Carver Elementary?

Are you over 18 years of age?

Do you self-identify as Black?



We want to hear about your experiences navigating distance learning during Covid-19

WHY? To explore, understand and uplift the experiences of Black families during Covid 19 and the role that distance learning played. Through interviews and dialogues with the researcher, community members will be able to share their stories.

*Due to Shelter in Place Orders; all interviews will take place virtually through zoom

If you are interested in participating or would like more information please contact the researcher, Devalin Jackson at dejackson@dons.usfca.edu