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Widespread Social Isolation During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Child and Parent Perspectives

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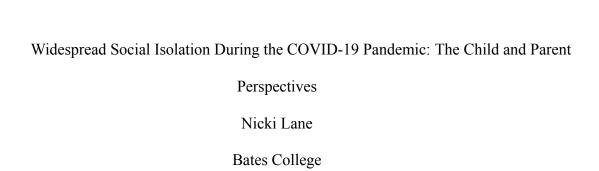Widespread Social Isolation During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Child and Parent

Perspectives

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"Some days I'm happy, and some days are just a little rough. Some days are worse than others [...] but you'll never know what tomorrow will bring you… so I just gotta wait till tomorrow." - Child 1

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the environment and conditions created by the global coronavirus pandemic impacted the psychological well-being of children 9 to 12 years of age. Specifically, this study sought to uncover how widespread isolation from peers, degree of family connectedness, and a variety of other factors related to children's psychological well-being. Both the child and parent perspectives on this subject were gathered in order to gain a full insight into children's experiences. This study consisted of semi-structured interviews with 38 children and 32 parents, and used Grounded Theory Methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to identify the emergent themes. In general, children were adaptable and resilient under the circumstances of widespread isolation, and all of the children in the sample claimed to be experiencing similar psychological well-being (PWB) levels during the pandemic as they did previously. High levels of family connectedness seemed to play a critical role in benefiting child PWB during this time. Fortunately, most children within this study were able to find ways of staying connected to friends, further contributing to satisfactory levels of child PWB. Children also discussed numerous additional variables that impacted them in various ways, each pointing to factors that they felt both hindered and enhanced their PWB. Parent perceptions not only aligned with and reinforced their child/children's answers, but offered deep insight into their children's experiences as well. Importantly, the convenience sample was not diverse, consisting entirely of families from a well-resourced population. Since children in this sample had many protective factors that lowered their risk of PWB challenges during the pandemic, interviewing children from a more under-resourced population may have yielded different results.

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Perspectives

The period stretching from 9 to 12 years of age, a stage called late childhood, is a crucial time in an individual's development, both physically and psychologically. Children in this age group go through many changes and rely on a number of factors in order to experience healthy development and psychological well-being (PWB). Especially important to children's psychological well-being during this time are their relationships with their peers and their family (Grusec & Hastings, 2015). As children approach adolescence, parents must begin to give their children more autonomy and the independence to socialize outside the family. Meanwhile, children form closer bonds with peers than they had in their early childhood years and begin to be more affected by this socialization, developing their social skills and interpersonal relationships in a deeper way than earlier in development (Grusec & Hastings, 2015; Helsen, Vollebergh & Meeus, 2000). Research has further confirmed the importance of this shift in social support, as it has been found that when children during this developmental window experience social isolation from their peer group, they can experience significant PWB challenges (Kim, Lee, & Riesche, 2020; Ladd & Ettekal, 2013).

In the year 2020, the United States underwent a condition in which most children experienced isolation from each other all at once. Beginning in March, children and their families' lives were almost completely uprooted due to the global coronavirus pandemic and the isolation orders that were set in place in order to prevent the virus' spread. Also commonly referred to as COVID-19, the coronavirus pandemic altered nearly every facet of life, from physical health to economic stability to social life (Kazlauskas & Quero, 2020). Regarding changes to children's daily lives, in-person schooling, community activities, and many

extracurricular activities were cancelled. Because of these restrictions, many children were isolated from their friends and spending more time with their families than ever before. Considering the importance that peers and friends as well as families have on the PWB of children in their later childhood years, it was thought to be beneficial to conduct research on children's experiences living under the conditions of widespread social isolation. Furthermore, hearing directly from children as they navigated this point in time could shed light on other potential factors that may influence their PWB as well.

This Introduction will begin with a brief review of the concept of psychological well-being along with the importance of peer socialization on the psychological well-being and development of children 9 to 12 years of age. I will then discuss how isolation from peers impacts children during this stage of development, emphasizing how the widespread isolation that took place during November of 2020 through January of 2021 may have held grave consequences for child well-being. In the next sections I will address how family connectedness may play a crucial role in the impact that widespread isolation from peers could have on children, as well as address five other factors that may hold great influence over children's well-being when they co-occur with periods of widespread isolation. Lastly, I will discuss what existing research has to say about parent perceptions of their children's psychological well-being, as literature demonstrates instances in which parents hold great understanding into their children's well-being, as well as where they fall short in accurately identifying their children's feelings in given situations.

Psychological Well-Being

Generally, psychological well-being (PWB) is about feeling content and satisfied as well as being able to function effectively (Cooper, 2018; Huppert, 2009). Researchers tend to disagree

on what constitutes or comprises the exact definition of PWB; however, literature has centered around a few prominent definitions and examples that generally constitute the subject. One commonly accepted theory is that PWB is made up of six dimensions: Self Acceptance, Positive Relations with Others, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Purpose in Life, and Personal Growth (Ryff & Singer, 1996; Goodman, Disabato, Kashdan, & Kauffman, 2017). Goodman et al. (2017) also identified a similar model of well-being that is widely accepted within psychology, the PERMA model (standing for Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Achievement). Developed by Seligman (2011), the PERMA model claims to account for current positive emotional states (also known as hedonic well-being) as well as presence of meaning in life or reaching one's developmental potential (referred to as eudaimonic well-being). These two concepts are key to this definition of PWB, as they enforce the notion that PWB is not only about one's current state of happiness and satisfaction, but also one's overall belief that their life has meaning and fulfillment. Both of these models have their strengths and weaknesses, and it is important to note that the various theories about what exactly constitutes and defines PWB are similar and related to one another (Goodman et al., 2017; Ryff, 1996). Virtually all models of well-being also agree that optimal functioning or flourishing occurs when one reports or experiences high amounts of each facet of well-being.

In order to have positive PWB, however, one does not need to have an absence of negative or painful emotions (Huppert, 2009). In other words, one does not need to reach an "optimal" level of well-being, or be categorized as "flourishing," in order to experience adequate levels of well-being. Rather, positive PWB is just as much about happiness and contentment as it is about feeling interested, engaged, accomplished, and loved, all of which can exist alongside occasional negative affect.

One's PWB changes and develops throughout their lifespan (Ryff, 2013). Erikson's (1950) stages of identity formation have been linked to PWB, with higher levels of ego development (knowing and understanding oneself) signaling higher levels of well-being. Furthermore, those who develop autonomy and personal growth as they age prove to have more positive emotions and well-being. This last finding will be especially important when addressing essential factors contributing to the healthy development and PWB of children in their later childhood years.

There exist numerous benefits to having and maintaining high levels of PWB. Huppert (2009) cited Ryan and Deci (2001) in saying that maintaining positive emotions leads to better levels of cognition and functioning than those without healthy PWB levels. Huppert (2009) also reported that having positive emotions has benefits on physical health and survival, as uncovered in various studies (i.e. Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001; Huppert &Whittington, 2003; Ostir, Markides, Peek, & Goodwin, 2001). Furthermore, while external factors can significantly impact one's well-being, one's attributes and characteristics can have an even greater influence on their state of well-being (Huppert, 2009). Ryff (2013) noted that personality traits and individual differences are great predictors of well-being. People are born with different personalities and characteristics which contribute to the way they view the world around them and to the emotions they tend to feel. In other words, some people are more inclined to experiencing positive emotions, participate in healthy coping mechanisms, and adapt to different environments and hardships than others.

Similar to the idea that some people are born with personality traits that lead them to having great PWB, others are more inclined to experience PWB depending on the facets of well-being they value most (Goodman et al., 2017). While one may value purpose and meaning

in life most, another may value social relationships most. Well-being is subjective, and what may cause someone to experience fulfillment, interest, and engagement may not be the same for another. This notion applies to the current research in that there is no one formula that people can follow to ensure PWB. Rather, feeling as if one attains PWB depends on various internal and external factors. In sum, research has held general consensus over the factors that most prominently contribute to child PWB. Yet, each child is unique and may have a different conception of what they feel lends them to feel content, fulfilled, and connected to others.

Late Childhood: The Importance of Peers

Erik Erikson's stages of psychological development describe the adjustment from parental influence to peer influence on children as the Industry versus Inferiority stage (Elkind, 1970). In this stage a child progresses from becoming a functioning member within their family to becoming a functioning member within society. Children begin to become more independent and interact with factors other than their families, such as their school, teachers, and peers. Children must now prove their capabilities to people other than their parents, relying on societal factors to encourage or discourage their development. For instance, if a child repeatedly receives praise and encouragement from adults outside their home, they feel as if they are worthy and capable of contributing to society, and they achieve Industry. However, if a child repeatedly feels self-conscious or that they are incapable of achieving their task, they feel a sense of inferiority. According to Erikson's book, *Childhood and Society* (1950), achieving a sense of industry can be far more complex than simple definitions such as Elkind's (1970) state. Throughout this span in a child's lifetime, a child will grapple with experiencing both moments of industry and of inferiority in numerous different circumstances. In instances when a child feels inferior at achieving the skills their society and school setting deems worthy, it is the family's and other

adults' responsibilities to preserve that child's sense of trust in themselves. Society must impart

to the child that they can still achieve industry over time, and the child must learn to develop

confidence in themselves to take on tasks presented to them, whether they will achieve or fail. In

other words, a child needs to learn to be independent in a setting away from their home while

also receiving guidance from adults so they understand they are not a failure if they do not

achieve at first try. When children successfully find a balance of both a sense of industry and

inferiority at this stage of development, they achieve competence-- a belief in themselves to take

on tasks presented before them. Erikson posited that a vital factor within the Industry versus

Inferiority stage is a child's ability to form interpersonal relationships, specifically close and

lasting bonds with peers (Issawi & Dauphin, 2016). By forming and appreciating the values of

friendship, children in this psychosocial stage gain confidence, develop their sense of identity,

and prepare to find a meaningful role for themselves in society. While children may not

consistently achieve industry, by experiencing moments of both industry and inferiority, and

through receiving guidance from trusted adults, they will be able to grow, have trust in their

interpersonal abilities, and gain confidence in themselves.

  While Erikson and other psychologists stood firm in identifying this developmental

period as late childhood, later theorists began to refer to this age range as early adolescence (e.g.,

Steinberg, 2001; Dahl, 2004). Researchers began to prefer this definition based on evidence

revealing that children -- especially females -- were beginning puberty at younger ages than in

the past, and the amount of time that these children were spending with their parents was

decreasing over generations (Steinberg, 2001). Although the onset of puberty can define when

children enter early adolescence in terms of physical development and some prominent physical

and affective changes, Dahl (2004) described how these children may very well still be in their

cognitive developmental window of late childhood. In other words, research has shown that cognitive development aligns with age and experience as opposed to onset of puberty. As Dahl reasoned, while a young girl who begins puberty at age 8, for example, may be physically developing at a more advanced rate, they will still have the reasoning, cognitive abilities, and experience of an 8-year-old, not of a 14-year-old. Definitions aside, there is a general consensus among researchers that children in this age range begin to center their worlds more around their peers than they did in their earlier childhood years. For the sake of consistency, the current study will refer to this stage as late childhood.

Other researchers and psychologists have also addressed the importance of peers and peer relationships in late childhood well-being and development. According to Nangle and Erdly (2001), peers are vital to many facets of children's well-being as they approach adolescence, specifically, in their social and intellectual development and in their psychological well-being. In their study they found that adolescents felt their most confident, accepted, and adjusted when they had close friends, belonged to a peer group, and felt important to that peer group (Villarruel & Luster, 2006). By spending time with close friends and feeling that one is a valued member of a group, children can feel more confident and capable, therefore boosting their sense of belonging and well-being. Connell and Wellborne (1991) also found that feelings of relatedness and connectedness to peers were significantly associated with early adolescents' adjustment to school, self-worth, and self-esteem. Late childhood is a time when one makes their first close friends and begins to rely on these friendships more than they did in their earlier childhood years. This time period, therefore, is seen as crucial to developing interpersonal skills and setting the stage for friendships and close relationships that children will have in the future.

McNamara, Colley, and Franklin (2015) also emphasized the importance of peer relationships in late childhood, and how these relationships can be crucial both to PWB and to healthy child development. They concluded that daily socialization contributes to positive social and emotional well-being among children by fostering senses of connectedness and belonging through developing their first close relationships with others who were their age. They specified that children feeling connected to others within their same age group becomes especially important for children in late childhood as they are in the process of shifting their primary socializing agent from their parents toward their peers. Similarly, in a study on the importance of peer relationships in Slovak schools, students determined that peer relationships were a crucial aspect in fostering greater well-being in school and that having friends was an essential motivator to attend school (Blaskova & McLellan, 2018). Blaskova and McLellan defended these student claims by citing former research that found that as children became older and approached adolescence, their needs changed and they relied more heavily on social interactions with peers rather than their families to maintain positive PWB (La Greca and Harrison, 2005, as cited in Blaskova & McLellan, 2018).

La Greca and Harrison (2005) also reported on the correlation between peer relationships in adolescence and PWB, focusing specifically on depression and social anxiety. Although their study focused on individuals during the peak adolescent years, La Greca and Harrison's research can perhaps be generalized to children going through a time when peer relationships become the focus of their social worlds. One of the study's notable findings was that adolescents felt limited differences between belonging to a high-- versus low-- status peer group. Adolescents from low-status peer groups reported that they still felt support, companionship, and friendship, all factors they deemed valuable to their PWB. Reviews by Zhang, Gao, Fokkema, Alterman, and

Liu (2015) and Asher and Paquette (2003) also provided evidence to support that having

high-quality relationships and receiving social support from peers mediates feelings of

specifically loneliness in children approaching adolescence. These findings are valuable in that

they further support the impact that having a close peer group and feeling connected to others --

as opposed to feeling popular or of high-status -- has on mental health. These findings contribute

to the notion that having reliable and close friendships foster feelings of connectedness within

children, therefore contributing to better development and PWB.

      Moreover, in their article on the importance of recess, McNamara, Colley, and Franklin

(2015) illustrated the potential effects on children who were not given the opportunity to freely

socialize with others. Specifically, their findings led them to believe that children can best

develop social skills and form relationships with others when they are given the chance to be

around other children in an unstructured setting. Although structured school settings and

classroom environments also support peer interaction and contribute to healthy social

development, children who are given the space and freedom to independently develop social

skills and form relationships can learn valuable life skills such as cooperation, patience,

communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. These skills are often seen as

necessary to support healthy child development and life skills that will become useful as they

encounter more real world social interactions. Another related and important factor contributing

to peer relationships and greater PWB is extracurricular activities. Activities that children

participate in outside of the school setting can be crucial environments for forming and

maintaining positive peer relationships (Oberle, Ji, Guhn, Schonert-Reichl, & Gadermann, 2019).

In such atmospheres, children learn to cooperate with others, share responsibilities and goals, and

socialize with peers from various backgrounds and lifestyles. Oberle et al.'s (2019) study in

particular found that activities that shifted from having an individual to having a team focus were associated with better mental health among older, more sociable children. These authors pointed to Fredricks and Eccles (2005) to support that this boost in PWB was attributed to feeling connected to peers and forming friendships. Forming and maintaining close bonds with peers can foster connectedness, enhance social skills, and contribute to a greater sense of PWB, likely contributing to healthy development as children in their later childhood years approach adolescence.

Effects of Social Isolation and Loneliness on Children and Adolescents

As researchers and psychologists have emphasized the importance that peers and peer relationships have on children's PWB and development, it is also critical to examine the effects that isolation from peers can have on children and adolescents. Children may experience isolation from peers in numerous ways, ranging from psychological isolation, such as victimization and bullying, to physical isolation, such as having a chronic illness. In one study, Kim, Lee, and Riesche (2020) reported on the psychological effects that adolescents with chronic illnesses experienced during their time in social isolation. Specifically, children with chronic illnesses in social isolation had higher levels of social withdrawal, lower levels of peer attachment, and lower levels of school adjustment, which were all associated with higher levels of depression in these individuals in comparison to those without chronic illnesses. Without reliable, strong peer relationships, children grew lonelier, less well-adapted to social circumstances, and more depressed. In another study examining physical isolation and its psychological impacts, Rubin (1989) discussed the implications in cases where children may choose to play alone rather than with their peer group, given the option. According to Rubin, although these children may choose solitary play due to mere preference, the child's physical act

of social isolation can still lead to maladjustment and may cause the child to be at risk for internalizing disorders such as anxiety, loneliness, and depression. Furthermore, experiencing less social interactions causes children to have less practice in social scenarios, thus potentially hindering their social skills development over time. While children may originally choose to isolate themselves from peers, the hindrance of social skills that can result may lead to PWB challenges such as negative self-perception, depression, and loneliness.

Researchers have also discussed the effects of psychological social isolation among children and adolescents. Ladd and Ettekal (2013) and Qualter et al. (2013) found that adolescents who experienced moderate to high levels of loneliness experienced heightened levels of depressive symptoms. Furthermore, Buhrmester (1990) found that children in their later childhood years and adolescents specifically who lacked friendships and friendship intimacy were more likely to experience socioemotional maladjustment than children in their earlier childhood years. Vanhalst et. al (2012) and Coyne (1976) also concluded that loneliness and depressive symptoms are interrelated and the longer children and adolescents are socially isolated or feeling socially isolated, the more depressed they may become, thus continuing the cycle.

In another study that focused on the parent perspective of having a child with a chronic illness, Bristow (2018) reported on the negative factors associated with families being more socially isolated from others, in particular, the mothers of children with chronic illnesses. Bristow's study focused on a more adult perspective in a socially isolating condition; however, her study might be relevant when comparing it to the current research that focuses on people who are also experiencing vast social isolation from their communities (in this case, children from their friends and classmates). In Bristow's study, mothers expressed concern about their own

experiences of social isolation, reporting how they often viewed themselves as prisoners in their

own home due to having little contact with other individuals and their communities. These

women felt confined, lonely, and socially withdrawn, further demonstrating the detrimental

effects social isolation may hold over one's PWB. It will be important to analyze whether or not

children will feel any of these similar effects due to being socially isolated during a time when

socialization is vital to their development and PWB.

Studies have also reported on peer isolation experienced by children with physical

disabilities. McNamara, Lakman, Spadafora, Lodewyk, and Walker (2018) found that children

with disabilities experienced more victimization and isolation during play than able-bodied peers

due to able-bodied children viewing them as different from- or less capable of playing with -

them. Because of these factors, children with disabilities experienced less peer interaction,

engaged in less supportive friendships, and felt less socially connected than their able-bodied

peers. These children also reported in their interviews feelings of loneliness and victimization.

According to McNamara et al. (2018), all of these factors left these children at high risk for

emotional and psychological problems such as depression and anxiety. Although feeling

personally rejected or victimized may have also played significant roles in these psychological

effects, and thus had their own unique consequences on children with disabilities, other

significant conclusions include the feelings of loneliness and social disconnection from

playmates that isolation can have on children.

Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, and Neumark-Sztainer (2007) further discussed the

implications that social isolation can have for children and adolescents, focusing both on

experiences of social isolation and the physical isolation that can accompany such exclusion.

Students who felt socially isolated from their peers reported having higher depressive symptoms

and lower levels of self-esteem than those who were not socially isolated. The strongest factor that was "protective" of the negative feelings of peer isolation was family connectedness. In other words, children who reported feeling closer or more connected with their families felt slightly fewer negative impacts of social isolation than those who did not feel this level of closeness. Even after accounting for protective factors, however, social isolation was still significantly associated with depressive symptoms and low levels of self-esteem. These results reveal the importance that peer relations and feelings of connectedness to social groups can have on children and adolescents. Although some children may value friendships or peer relationships more than others, complete isolation or lack of contact from peers has repeatedly shown to hinder psychological well-being.

Moreover, Loades et al. (2020) reviewed 63 studies on the effects of social isolation and loneliness on children and adolescents' mental health and well-being. The review found that social isolation and loneliness increased the risk for depression and anxiety among children and adolescents both during the time of isolation and even years after isolation ends. Researchers also uncovered two notable factors from their analyses in relation to the state of isolation under the coronavirus pandemic. First, researchers found that duration of social isolation was more likely to cause negative mental health effects as opposed to intensity of isolation and loneliness. Second, children and adolescents who experienced enforced isolation in particular were more likely to require mental health services and to experience post-traumatic stress once the enforced isolation was over. Given the situation that the present research focuses on, in which children were required to socially distance from one another and stay home from school for months at a time, there was cause for concern about how the isolating climate would impact children and adolescents' PWB in the moment, and for years to come.

Isolation Under Coronavirus

While there have existed numerous cases of individual children experiencing isolation, loneliness, and social withdrawal, the United States underwent a condition in which most children experienced isolation from each other all at once. The coronavirus pandemic disrupted the lives of children and parents alike, as numerous isolation restrictions were set in place to prevent the virus' spread (Kazlauskas & Quero, 2020). The restrictions that were imposed upon children in particular included (but were not limited to) remote school, putting a hold on indoor extracurricular activities, and canceling school events (Hossain, Sultana, & Purohit, 2020). Adults and children alike were also expected to socially distance from others when in public, and do their best not to see or socialize with people who were not in their families or "pods," groups of two or three families that agreed to socialize with only each other (Moyer, 2020).

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, many people experienced worsening or new levels of depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems due to stressors such as financial instability, loneliness, or shift in social life (Patrick et al., 2020). The concern regarding children in their later childhood years during the pandemic was their lack of in-person socialization with friends and peers, because of the importance that peer relationships and socialization have on them during this developmental window (e.g., Elkind, 1970; La Greca and Harrison, 2005). While there is some evidence surrounding how pandemics have affected adults and hospital workers in the past, for example, during the SARS outbreak, there is little evidence on how large-scale, long-term disease outbreaks have affected children and their psychological well-being (Lee, 2020). Even further, children may have experienced a multitude of other variables that impacted their lives and routines in their own unique and prominent ways. It is

therefore important to address how some other variables could have played a role in influencing children's mental health throughout the period of mass social isolation.

While adults and parents alike were concerned about child well-being and development during a time when children were isolated from their peers, some journalists eased these concerns, reassuring that this isolation was only temporary (Warner, 2021; Ritchel, 2020). Although isolation is devastating to observe, and likely to cause momentary effects to well-being and loneliness within children and adolescents, children have been known to adapt to new situations, and adjust for short periods of time to strange and challenging circumstances. One example of such adjustment was found in children during and after the Great Depression era (Elder, 1974, as cited in Richtel, 2020). Many children were able to adjust after experiencing this hardship, and actually experienced resilience rather than challenges to PWB.

Richtel (2020) and other journalists commented on the trends they saw throughout early stages of the coronavirus pandemic in order to justify why children might be able to adjust to trying times, and why the coronavirus pandemic in particular may not produce long-term PWB challenges. Primarily, Richtel emphasized that loving families and a nurturing home environment can be essential to their children during a time when peer relationships are lacking. Although children in their later childhood years become more independent and crave social interaction outside the family, children in this age range are still extremely close to their families, and rely on their parents and siblings for socialization, support, and affection (Richtel, 2020; Helsen, Vollebergh & Meeus, 2000). Children who had a positive and stable home environment and who experienced routine in their daily lives during the pandemic may have felt more adjusted and cared for. Another factor theorized in lending children to greater adjustment during the pandemic was the pods that families formed with one another (Richter, 2020). These small groups of two

or three families socializing in person allowed for greater amounts of quality social interaction between children and adults. Perhaps having a strong family unit combined with a small yet consistent peer group helped mitigate the significant PWB challenges children may otherwise have experienced during the coronavirus pandemic.

Aside from family support and infrequent peer interactions, it is likely that there were other variables that impacted the ways in which children experienced, felt about, and managed the time of widespread social isolation. During the pandemic, researchers, journalists, and bloggers commented on a handful of variables that may have been impacting children during this unique time. One variable predicted to aid children during the pandemic was technology. Koeze and Popper (2020) conveyed how much more inclined people of all ages were to using technology as a form of social interaction during the pandemic than prior to the pandemic. According to Koeze and Popper, rather than text or call, people more than ever before were utilizing FaceTime and Google Chat and Zoom to have virtual social interactions and to even play virtual games together. For children, these applications may have proven essential during the pandemic as a means of interacting with friends. Another factor theorized to benefit some children during the pandemic was child tendencies toward introversion or being alone. Bader (2020) noted that many children who were more introverted than others reported being content with their increased amounts of home time and limited in-person peer interaction that the pandemic caused.

Some children may also have characteristics, preferences, or tendencies that made life during the pandemic more difficult for them than for their peers. Many physicians, psychologists, and reporters expressed concern that children who tended to be more anxious might experience greater PWB challenges during the pandemic than children who did not have these

predispositions (Young Minds, 2020). Meanwhile, some worried that the changes in children's routines -- including a significant lack of routine -- brought on by the pandemic might have significantly deteriorated certain children's PWB (Baptista, 2020). Furthermore, children with learning disabilities and/or disorders also had to adapt to their remote school life, away from their familiar in-person classroom settings. For these children, such as those with ADHD, they may have found challenges as well as benefits in their new home schooling environment (School Changes, 2020). Each child living through the pandemic experienced different effects of their change in environment and lifestyle depending on their respective situations, their individual personality traits, and their personal preferences. It was important to include these different perspectives within the present research in order to understand how such an unprecedented time affected each child differently. All of these factors mentioned above will be discussed in further detail below, as they may have had significant impacts in the way that children perceived their PWB during widespread social isolation, with a first look at one crucial factor to child well-being: family connectedness.

Family Closeness and Connectedness

A significant factor in impacting child well-being of children in their later childhood years is family support and connectedness. In regards to the coronavirus pandemic, family support and connectedness might have enhanced children's well-being in cases where they felt psychologically or physically isolated from their peers. This section will discuss how healthy family dynamics can contribute to children's overall development and well-being, and how family connectedness could play a vital role in mitigating the potential psychological effects that children experienced from lack of peer connection and support.

Despite the shift that children in their later childhood years experience in placing more emphasis on peer socialization than they did in earlier childhood years, parents still hold equal weight as peers over their children's PWB in many ways (Steinberg, 2001). Healthy family relationships and sense of family connectedness have been shown to greatly contribute to children's PWB even as they begin to socialize more with their peers than in their earlier childhood years (Grusec & Hastings, 2015). During the late childhood period, the extent to which children rely on their families versus their friends to maintain a strong sense of PWB differs on an individual basis to some extent, as well. According to Steinberg (2001), children in this stage of their lives may feel most influenced by their families when their relationships with their families are stronger than with their friends, and most influenced by their friends when these relationships are stronger than those with their families.

While the amount that children rely on their families versus their friends to maintain a strong sense of PWB may vary, researchers generally agree that parents are still some of the most important people in children's lives during these years (e.g., Steinberg, 2001; Grusec & Hastings, 2015). Specifically, family relationships and dynamics significantly contribute to the state of children's well-being during this stage in their development. During the late childhood period, parents take on a somewhat different role than they had in early and mid childhood. According to Kobak, Abbott, Zisk and Bounoua (2017), as children's perceptions of their parents as well as family dynamics change during late childhood/early adolescence, parents need to adapt. Parents must become more sensitive and attuned to their children than in early childhood, and be supportive of their independent decision-making. Kobak et al. (2017) found that when children perceived their parents as overbearing or too controlling, they were more prone to develop problem behaviors and less likely to develop autonomy in decision-making and advocating for

their needs, two important life skills. However, when parents achieved a balance of caring for

their children's safety with respecting their independence, and had open conversations with their

children about their individualized wants and needs, children then became confident and capable

individuals. Similarly, Ryan and Deci (2000) emphasized the importance of parents giving their

children more autonomy as they near the end of their childhood years. Providing children the

freedom to become independent and make decisions on their own (with some guidance) has

helped build intrinsic motivation within their children while also allowing them to feel supported

and cared for, all of which can contribute to healthy development and attaining greater

well-being.

Further research has also emphasized the importance of familial support for children even

as they desire more independence. Ellen Galinsky performed qualitative research, interviewing

children ages 8 to 18 about work and family life, uncovering what children of all ages

appreciated in their parents' parenting, and also what they'd appreciate more of (Galinsky, 1999).

An interview with Ellen Galinsky on her research focused on her discoveries among teenagers in

particular (WGBH, 2002). Older children, even teenagers, said that they appreciated when their

parents asked them about their lives, and when parents made efforts to truly be for and support

them. Despite the importance that friends hold within their lives, children specifically stated that

parents are the ones who should be there in challenging times and to help them with their biggest

issues. Children of all ages also stated the importance of everyday family rituals and traditions

their parents held. How parents expressed their interests and involvement in their children's lives

everyday made lasting positive impacts on children. One message that Galinsky wanted to

resonate with parents was, "Have those rituals, have those traditions. Those are important, even

with teens." While Galisnky's interviews focused on teenagers in particular, these findings apply

to the current research in that, as children age and begin to step away from their home and their

parents, it is still important for parents to be involved and nurturing figures in their children's

lives. Providing support, quality time, and genuine loving parent-child relationships has shown to

contribute to children's PWB even in years when they may desire more independence.

Families who are more connected and supportive than others may especially benefit

children during a time of social isolation from peers. Gauze, Bukowski, Aquan-Assee, and

Sippola (1996) found that children's friendships and their family relationships interacted in terms

of how adjusted children felt as they approached adolescence. While having a supportive friend

network can enhance the adjustment and well-being of children with dysfunctional or strict

family environments, a warm and cohesive family environment can be a buffer for children who

struggle with friendships and better the adjustment among these children.

Helsen, Vollebergh and Meeus (2000) also found interactions between parental and peer

support on children in their later childhood years. They concluded that, while true that children

during this developmental window often rely on their peers more than their family for

socialization and support, children can still significantly benefit from close, cohesive family

environments during these years. Specifically, they found that children who reported having less

supportive family environments yet who still had supportive friendships reported more problems

than children who had both high-quality friendships as well as a healthy and supportive family

environment. Furthermore, Greenberg, Siegel, and Leitch (1983) reported that close attachment

and high-quality relationships among adolescents and parents were associated with adolescents

having increased levels of life satisfaction and self-esteem. Importantly, quality of attachment to

parents showed a moderating effect on their levels of self-esteem for children under high-stress

conditions. When children and adolescents go through stressful or traumatic times in their lives,

it may remain crucial that parents offer support, love, and care. Pinquart (2017) also found a strong connection between parental warmth and reduced levels of depression and anxiety, as well as lower levels of internalizing symptoms within children.

Burt, Cohen, and Bjorck (1988) further emphasized how families can be a buffer to childhood stressors through the type of environment they display for their children. When families were cohesive, expressive, and organized, children and adolescents were better able to adapt and adjust to their stressors and thus, had better psychological functioning than if they had not received such strong support. Similarly, Burt et al. (1998) found that family closeness and healthy levels of attachment were important factors in reducing adolescent depression. Lu et al. (2020) also conveyed that children who feel closer to their parents may generate better self-esteem than children who are less close to their parents, increasing their ability to combat depression. During a time of social isolation in particular, children may have had to rely more heavily on their relationships with their parents and families to maintain socialization and a sense of connectedness and belonging. Children may have also experienced declining levels of well-being due to lack of peer interactions; familial closeness and cohesion may have become even more vital during this stage of a child's life in promoting both positive social relationships and healthy psychological functioning than ever before.

Manczak, Williams, and Chen (2016) also highlighted consistency and routine as a top priority for parents to display toward their children as they approach adolescence. Their model revealed that both parent and youth depressive symptoms were attributed to having very minimal family routines. Family routines, indicating predictable and supportive family behavior, can therefore be important in reducing depressive symptoms and maintaining positive well-being in children. Instilling a balance of routine and autonomy with support, connectedness, and warmth

as children near adolescence can allow parents to promote positive well-being and a sense of belonging within children.

Regarding the coronavirus pandemic in particular, researchers have emphasized how crucial parent and family relationships may have been in maintaining positive well-being within children. According to Moroni, Cheti, and Tominey (2020), children might have experienced greater amounts of psychological issues during the pandemic than beforehand, and the way parents interacted with each other and their children could determine how drastic these issues became. For example, having a mother with mental health-related problems might have caused children to experience a stressful home environment, hindering a child's socio-emotional or psychological health. Lacking quality family time could also have had detrimental psychological effects on children during a time when children already lacked social involvement and relationships. As research has shown that children in their later childhood years crave socialization with peers, parents may not have been able to adequately make up for the lack of interaction children faced. Moroni et al. (2020) also noted that adopting a strict parenting style could have especially impactful negative outcomes on children's psychological well-being. Because children were schooling from home during the pandemic, Moroni et al. (2020) remarked that parents might have instilled more rules and boundaries; however, if restrictions became too strict, it is possible that children could have regressed socio emotionally or psychologically. On the other hand, if parents were more sensitive or attuned toward their children, children might have experienced opposite effects. During a time of great stress, and when children were in need of socialization and support, it may have been especially important for parents and families to provide a secure, loving, and attuned atmosphere in order to foster a sense of connectedness between themselves and their children (Burt et al., 1988).

Miscellaneous Variables Impacting Child Well-Being

Social isolation from peers and family connectedness are two prominent factors in influencing children's well-being in their later childhood years. However, children experience a myriad of factors and variables each day that all affect their routines, their interactions, and their feelings in one way or another. Amid the pandemic and the stressors and changes that went along with it, these numerous other variables may have played significant roles in altering child well-being. This introduction will now present and discuss five of these potential factors that may have influenced children during the coronavirus pandemic. It is important to keep in mind, though, that this Introduction will only gloss over each variable, and that it will not touch on every factor that children themselves might have felt significantly influenced their lives during the pandemic. These factors presented below will be the primary ones focused on throughout the study, and the ones that will be most closely analyzed throughout the research.

Technology and Social Media

Technology and social media have already been a controversial subject among parents and families. Oftentimes parents enforce limits on their children's technology access, worried about overuse and the psychological harms that could come from too much screen time (Kamenetz, 2020). However, it is possible that during a time of wide-spread restricted peer interaction, technology and social media were a saving grace for children's mental health.

Previous research has shown some of the effects that technology has on children with limited in-person access to peers. Maor and Mitchem (2015) evaluated existing research on a technology network designed to link hospitalized youth who were socially isolated from their peers and their school to an interactive online community. Results revealed that children who were physically isolated from school and engaged in this interactive network felt more connected

to their school and peers, and that they felt less lonely than before they began their involvement

in this online community. Moreover, Rice, Kurzban, and Ray (2012) performed a study to

determine the effects that connecting homeless youth with friends from home through use of

technology would have on these children's psychological well-being. They found that connecting

homeless youth to their old friends via technology was associated with reduced depressive

symptoms, and that these devices may have been key in connecting youth with positive peer

relationships that benefited their mental health and well-being. Results from these studies may be

able to be generalized to the time of the coronavirus pandemic in that children who were

physically isolated from others may have been able to feel connected to their peers through

technology and social media usage. Perhaps an increased use of technology and social media

improved psychological well-being in children by decreasing feelings of loneliness and fostering

feelings of connectedness.

     Regarding cell phone usage in particular, Wei and Lo (2006) performed a study on how

cell phone usage may help college students feel connected and close to those they love while at

school. Results found that cell phone usage enhanced one's social ties to their family, relieved

feelings of boredom by allowing students to communicate with faraway friends, and fostered

overall feelings of social connectedness. These findings relate to the present research in that,

while physically separated from friends and other loved ones, communicating through

technology may have been able to foster connectedness and maintain relationships among

children and their friends. Important to address are the technological advancements to cell

phones and other devices that have occurred in recent years, lending children access to a greater

variety of technological communication than ever before. It is possible that during a time of

widespread isolation, such as during a pandemic, technology and the communication it can enable benefitted children's sense of connectedness, and in turn, their psychological well-being.

On the other hand, it is possible that technology and social media may have caused or exacerbated well-being issues within children during a time of widespread isolation. Barthorpe, Winstone, Mars, and Moran (2020) found that among 13- to 15-year-old girls, greater social media use was associated with greater depression, lower self-esteem, and higher rates of self-harm. Liu, Wu, and Yao (2015) also conducted a meta-analysis on how screen time affects preadolescent and adolescent psychological well-being, with a specific focus on depression. Compared with a reference group of children and adolescents who had no screen time usage, participants who had more daily screen time had a 12.3% increased risk of depression. Specifically, two hours or more of screen time usage was associated with increasing levels of depression in children and adolescents. Tremblay et al. (2011) also completed a systematic review to determine the relationship between a variety of sedentary behaviors and well-being in school-aged children (5 to 17 years old). The review found that increased screen time usage was associated with increased depressive symptoms and low self-esteem and sense of self-worth. Similar to Liu et al.'s (2015) study, there was evidence conveying that as hours of screen time usage a day increased, so did the levels of risk for low self-esteem. Hrafnkelsdottir et al. (2018) also found that adolescents who reported both less screen time usage and higher levels of engagement in physical activities than children who reported greater screen time and usage and lower engagement in physical activity reported the lowest amounts of depression, anxiety, dissatisfaction, and self-esteem issues. During a time when children were all isolated from their schools, peers, and daily activities, many may have turned to their electronic devices for greater quantities a day than they had before the pandemic. Perhaps these children, seeking

technological forms of entertainment and stimulation to fill their days, might have actually been increasing their risk for depression or other well-being challenges.

Yet, it is possible that the associations between social media usage and mental health do more to reinforce social media fears and anxieties than they do reveal the truths behind social media's effects on children and adolescents. In a qualitative study gaining adolescent perspectives on social media use, O'Reilly, Dogra, Whiteman, Hughes, Eruyar, and Reilly (2018) found that a vast majority of adolescents reiterated correlational research, stating their fears and negative effects that social media and technology have on mental health. Yet, adolescents gave abstract responses and spoke on behalf of the adolescent population at large as opposed to speaking from their own personal, individual experiences. It is possible that adolescent beliefs about social media and technology effects stem from the vast information circulating around the fears of social media and technology use, as opposed to originating from their own negative experiences with these devices and platforms. The current qualitative research regarding technology and social media effects on adolescents during a time of widespread isolation may allow for further insight into children and adolescent opinion on this controversial subject. Perhaps children in their later childhood years will both state concerns about their knowledge on associations between technology, social media and mental health, while also posing contradicting evidence of their positive screen time usage, or maybe, the correlational data will be supported by child responses.

Access to Resources During the Pandemic

Another potential crucial variable at play is a family's access to resources. Under routine societal circumstances, living in low-income households and/or having limited access to basic resources such as food is a strong predictor of poor mental health in children (e.g. Lachance,

2014; Reiss, 2013). Specifically, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are much more likely to develop mental health problems compared to peers from middle-- or upper-- class homes. During the time of economic crisis caused by the pandemic, individuals and families were even more concerned about their financial state, paying off debt, and feeding their families (Mental Health Foundation, 2020). Families and children who relied on community and school resources such as school-provided meals, or grandparents to help with childcare, were left to fend for themselves. The stress that low-income families were under by having to self-rely on resources for their children that they otherwise would have had assistance with under normal societal conditions may have led to dramatic well-being challenges among both parents and their children.

Children with access to online educational resources might also have fared better during these times than those who did not. Maor and Mitchem (2015) found that linking hospitalized youth with online educational resources increased their potential for learning. Still, there were issues regarding teaching methods, the interaction among students and teachers, and the processing and creating knowledge among the virtual hospitalized students. Maor and Mitchem concluded that technology can be a vital tool in enhancing the learning of children who are unable to receive in-person schooling, however these resources require close attention to detail in regards to its implementation and pedagogy in order to create adequate learning environments for children who are unable to receive in-person schooling. Voogt, Fisser, Roblin, Tondeur, and vaan Braak (32013) also discussed how the type of online educational resources distributed to remote students makes significant differences in their learning. They reported that some of the most successful technological educational resources are those that represent different domains of knowledge and that adapt teaching to different students, as all students have different needs.

Online educational resources that cannot fulfill these parameters may not be producing adequate educational materials for the vast majority of students. During times of widespread isolation, some students may have been receiving better quality online materials and resources than others. Voogt et al. (2013) also noted how different teachers may utilize technological resources in different ways depending on their pedagogical beliefs, and while these methods may prove successful for some students, others may find themselves confused and overwhelmed. When schooling from home, children who were once able to ask questions or have lessons adapted to their different styles of learning may not have been able to receive such individualized attention. Rather, they had to try and adapt to their teacher's online teaching style. It will be important to note these inequities in access to quality or individualized education within the current research, as some children may have faced challenges to their learning and well-being if their online education did not meet their learning needs.

Access to therapy and counseling services were also of concern during the coronavirus pandemic. Resources like therapy and access to community services are important factors in reducing depression in children of low-income families (Davaasambuu, Hauwadhanasuk, Matsuo, & Szatmari, 2020). According to D'Arcy (2020), surveys concluded that people from disadvantaged backgrounds were not only worried about financial strain and access to basic services during the pandemic, but they were also concerned about a lack of access to psychological resources. Although some families in the U.S. had access to forums such as online therapies and support groups, many families were not so fortunate, and did not have the funds or resources for such aid. According to a survey by Jones (2020), "More than half the students who responded to the survey said they're in need of mental health support since the school closures began in mid-March." These data included 22% of children who claimed to have had access to

mental health resources before the pandemic, but who then had limited or no access during

COVID-19. During the pandemic, children who previously had outlets such as school counselors

or peers as mental health resources were stuck at home, with limited or even no access to therapy

or counseling. Children with limited access to both basic resources and psychological assistance

may have experienced more drastic PWB challenges than those who still had access to these

resources.

Sensitive or Introverted Children

Children who are more introverted or more sensitive than others may have actually

experienced greater PWB during the pandemic than beforehand. Previous research has indicated

that more shy or introverted children may not derive the same psychological benefits from peer

socialization as more extroverted children (e.g., Barstead, 2018; Wang, 2013; Rubin, 2009).

Specifically, children who naturally prefer solitude do not fare as well in school and are less

comfortable around others than children who prefer socialization. Another study on introverted

children found that these children placed less importance and derived less pleasure from

friendships and social interactions (Selfhout et al. 2010). Introverted children may have therefore

been more well-off than extroverted children in a situation that barred children from in-person

peer interaction. Furthermore, in predicting the ways in which widespread isolation could impact

children differently in the early stages of the pandemic, Schiffman (2020) described the benefits

that widespread isolation might have on sensitive children. Different from introverted children,

Schiffman defined sensitive children as children who are keen observers, but who oftentimes

become overstimulated and are weary of new people and situations. Schiffman wrote that these

children can become overwhelmed during school and other sociable activities, and may actually

feel much more at ease and comfortable in isolation. In fact, isolation may have provided the

space for these children to have more "breathing space 'to explore, create, read and think on their

own.'" Children who are more sensitive than others may have viewed the time of isolation as

more of an escape from the socially stressful interactions they used to face on a day-to-day basis.

To view the subject of introversion in a different light, Coplan, Ooi, and Rose-Krasnor et

al. (2013) performed a study on the positive PWB and adaptability of children who are

introverted and/or socially withdrawn. In former studies, 9 to 12 year-old children who prefer

solitude or who are more socially withdrawn did not differ in levels of internalizing symptoms

such as social anxiety, negative affect, and depression from those who are less socially

withdrawn. Rather than feel lonely, these children felt content in nonsocial environments.

Furthermore, Teppers et al. (2013) has shown that some children who are introverted prefer to be

alone as it is a better environment for them to be creative, explore interests, and self reflect.

These children's comfort or preference for being alone has been proven to be adaptive in that

these children are more likely to feel content and free when alone as opposed to anxious or

worrisome. Because these children may thrive from solitary environments and derive more

psychological benefits from being alone rather than with others, they may have also better

adapted to the environment of widespread isolation from peers under the coronavirus pandemic.

Children Who Prefer Routines/Children Who Think Rigidly

The pandemic might have significantly affected the PWB of children who prefer routines

or who are more rigid than others. Grayer, Jarrett, and Pomrenze (2020) noted that children with

certain disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorder may have difficulties adapting to a

lifestyle in which routines are minimal or have drastically shifted. Eshraghi et al. (2020) also

specified that a common symptom of Autism Spectrum Disorder is needing and craving routine

and ritual, and those who place emphasis on these routines may have experienced behavioral or

emotional upheaval since school closures due to the pandemic. The disruption in routine that the pandemic caused may have drastically impacted the well-being of children on the autism spectrum in particular. That said, such disruption might also have significantly affected the lives of other children who place importance on routine or for those who use routines as a coping mechanism. According to the Lucy Daniels Center (n.d.), some children feel a greater urge than others to control situations, and they have more difficulty being flexible and adapting to new situations. These children can be identified as "rigid" and place greater importance on having routine than others. During the coronavirus pandemic, a time when previous routines shifted to become much more minimal and were changing daily, such children may have had difficulty adapting to this chaotic environment.

Young Minds (2020) also noted that many children, adolescents, and teens manage their PWB through having established routines. Using routine as a coping mechanism was disrupted due to school closures and widespread isolation, and individuals expressed fears of becoming more anxious or preoccupied with their own thoughts while at home and alone for such long spans of time. Being out of school and not having a natural school day may have challenged these children's well-being more than children who do not crave structure in their daily lives.

While some children have specific preferences for routine and order, instilling family and child routines into one's home have proven to benefit all children's well-being and development (The Importance of Routine for Children, n.d.). Specifically, instilling daily routines can increase children's confidence and independence and their levels of self control, reduce stress levels, and expose them to healthy habits. Attending school and experiencing school routines are extremely beneficial to children and an expected part of their day; however, since the start of school closures and widespread isolation, children were not able to experience the benefits that having

daily routines brought them. Families who struggled with maintaining their own routines may

have hindered their child's well-being and development during the pandemic. Larsan and Jordan

(2019) noted that children who come from chaotic households exhibit more behavior problems

than those who come from consistent and routine oriented households. Caron (2020) claimed that

disruption in a family or child's normal lifestyle may result in heightened stress levels within

children or even a regression to earlier stages of development, especially in children who are

resistant to change. Caron (2020) and Grose (2020) noted that in order to mitigate these feelings

and behaviors within children that may have come with the pandemic, families should have

provided children with as many reminders of their normal lifestyles as they could. For instance,

families who had Friday night traditions such as movie nights should still have participated in

this weekly activity to remind their children that they still had control, order, and normalcy

within their lives (Garon, 2020). Sytsma, Kelley, and Wymer (2001) also discovered positive

correlations between child behavior and having child and family routines. Families who were

able to provide children with a greater sense of routine than others during the pandemic may in

turn have promoted positive PWB within their children.

Children and Anxiety

Children who already tend to be more anxious than others may have experienced

heightened difficulties with their PWB and mental health while isolated from their school,

extracurricular activities, and peers. In a study on children who were survivors of pediatric brain

tumors, Desjardins et al. (2019) reported on both the children's baseline and follow-up

depression and anxiety levels after experiences of being socially isolated from peers during their

time in treatment. Desjardins et al. found that children who had prior depressive and anxiety

symptoms had even worse levels of depression and anxiety after experiencing social withdrawal,

indicating that children who experience psychological distress and issues with social adjustment may in turn develop even greater mental health problems. These findings relate to the current research in that children who, while not diagnosed with clinical levels of anxiety but who are more prone to experiencing anxiety symptoms, may be at greater risk for an increase in symptoms after experiencing both a time of crisis and social isolation from peers.

Regarding COVID-19 in particular, Young Minds (2020) reported that people who sought out mental health resources before the pandemic had to cancel their face-to-face support and were consequently worried about their PWB. Many children and adolescents also opted not to seek out online resources or therapy as they are worried about privacy issues at home. Moreover, a survey administered by Rethink Mental Illness (2020) found that 80% of people with pre existing mental health issues reported feeling worse since the start of the pandemic. Specifically, "69% of people stated that their mental health was worse because they cannot see family or friends" and "47% of people said that their mental health had become worse because they are now receiving less support from mental health services." Participants in the survey had diagnosed mental illness as opposed to having less serious or non-clinical levels of mental health issues. Although the current research had to exclude those with an explicitly diagnosed mental health disorder in order to keep the population more homogeneous and generalizable, it is important to note the implications that having a prior mental health condition can have on declining mental health during the coronavirus pandemic. Many children without clinical levels of depression or anxiety may still have felt exacerbated worries, anxieties, or depressive symptoms within their daily lives. These variables are therefore still important to acknowledge within the current research as they may have left these children at risk for worsening mental health due to the widespread isolation they were experiencing.

It is also common for children to be more prone to anxious feelings than others or to be more psychologically affected by a life stressor without being specifically diagnosed with a mental health condition. Similarly, it is typical for children to experience biomarkers of anxiety without meeting the full criteria to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (Cross, Goharpey, Laycock, & Crewther, 2019). Children may also share features of anxiety with another type of disorder, such as ADHD, yet not become diagnosed with comorbid anxiety until later on in life, or even ever at all. Children not specifically diagnosed with anxiety or depression may thus still experience anxious tendencies or demeanors. It may therefore be significant to note how children with these propensities felt the effects of the widespread isolation compared to children who did not have anxious predispositions.

Children With Learning Disabilities and/or Disorders

For children with learning disabilities or disorders who rely on resources such as accommodations or aids to assist them in schoolwork, social isolation from these resources may have hindered not only these children's learning development, but their PWB as well. Specifically, children with learning disorders such as ADHD and dyslexia rely on either Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans in order to assist them in their learning. An IEP plan looks different for each child who utilizes it, and is formulated and adapted by the child's teachers, counselors, and parents in order to ensure the child receives a fair and quality education (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). To carry out an effective IEP, teachers often adapt their curriculum and lessons to fit these students' needs, they offer students extra assistance within the classroom, and supervisors often oversee and monitor the individualized resources these students receive to ensure that the IEP is being carried out appropriately. A 504 plan exists for students who do not meet the criteria for an IEP but still benefit from in-class

accommodations, such as extended time and verbal, isual, or technological aids (504 Education

Plans, 2016). Within the United States, it was unclear whether children with learning disabilities

had access to any of the resources or assistance that IEPs, 504 plans, and other individualized

education assistance provided them while they were schooling from home. Having limited or no

access to these essential learning resources may have hindered not only these children's

development, but their PWB as well.

     Moreover, Grayer (2020), Asbury (2020), and Aishworiya and Kang (2020) highlighted

some of the hardships that children with disabilities who received aid in school faced during the

pandemic. She noted that the isolation orders separated students from teachers, therapists and

aides, all people who are physical and mental support systems for these individuals. Whether

children were in need of occupational therapy, a one-on-one aid, or in-person learning to

experience effective education, these children were all experiencing critical losses to their

learning and daily routines. For children who were at a crucial age in development, the time of

widespread isolation may have set these children back many milestones, delayed development,

or caused them to experience declining PWB.

     In Milan, Telehealth services were developed in order to assist children with language

and learning disorders who were schooling from home during the pandemic. Parents reported

both positive reviews as well as challenges they experienced with these services (Sarti, De

Salvatore, Gazzola, Pantaleoni, & Granocchio, 2020). Even though these online services seemed

appropriate substitutes for the in-person aid they were receiving in school, parents emphasized

how children with learning disabilities experienced numerous struggles during the pandemic that

telehealth services could only do so much to assist with. Parents reported challenges with

hyperactivity, aggression, mood fluctuations, and anger within their children during school

closures and isolation orders. Parents speculated that these emotional and behavioral challenges stemmed from their disorientation to schooling at home, and the disruption from having a normal school routine. Although telehealth services helped create a more productive learning environment for children forced to school from home during the pandemic, there may have been no true solution to enhance their learning, socialization skills, and well-being that the in-person school setting provided. After experiencing the effects of isolation from paraeducators, aids and other resources for a greater amount of time, the current research may be able to capture a more thorough and specific idea of how having a learning disability or disorder can affect the well-being of children in their later childhood years.

The Parent Perspective on Children's Experiences and Well-Being

There are endless possibilities for how the conditions of widespread isolation impacted children's PWB during the coronavirus pandemic. While social isolation from peers was most likely of substantial importance in impacting children's well-being and development, (e.g., Buhrmester, 1990; Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, & Neumark-Sztainer 2007) and while family connectedness potentially played a significant role as well (e.g., Burt, Cohen, & Bjorck, 1988), other factors also took part in enhancing or hindering children's well-being. As children experienced the impacts from these variables, it would be valuable to gain the parent perspective of how children were impacted during such a unique time as well. There exists extensive amounts of studies that obtained either a parent or a child's perspective on how children felt in a given condition. These studies can be beneficial in that the data obtained may have been more manageable and answers may have been more homogeneous and corresponding. However, researchers often find throughout these studies that in order to gain more thoughtful and comprehensive results, it would be extremely useful to gain both the child and parent

perspectives on children's thoughts and feelings. Robson, Brogaard-Clausen, and Hargreaves (2019) came across such realization in gaining only the parents' and practitioners' perspectives on which will most benefit children's well-being: being loved or being listened to. Parents often emphasized the importance of love while practitioners thought that listening to children would enhance their well-being the most. Once gaining these answers from the adult perspective, however, researchers realized how useful it would have been to then obtain the child's perspective on which method of support actually benefits their well-being by talking to children directly. Sometimes, parents or the adults in children's lives feel they know what is most beneficial for children's development. Meanwhile, what these "experts" believe is optimal for child development may not actually feel optimal to every child. It is therefore important to see where these gaps lie in what parents think they know is important for child development and what children themselves believe enhances their own well-being.

Cagulada and Koller (2020) also only gained the parent perspective in a qualitative study on the social and emotional well-being of children who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH). Researchers gathered similar reports among parent participants on the factors that hinder social and emotional well-being of their DHH children, such as stigma and bullying, and factors associated with greater well-being, such as single sports. Nevertheless, researchers emphasized that gaining the parents' perspectives only accounted for a part of the complex story of the lives of children who are DHH. In order to grasp the full story and experience of the social and emotional well-being of DHH children, both parent and child perspectives would need to be heard. Only then would researchers best be able to identify and create the support systems and interventions these children would need.

Simpson, Adams, Wheeley, and Keen (2019) also performed a study in which they recognized the importance of retrieving both the child and parent perspective on a subject. Their qualitative research explored only parental perceptions of the presentation, triggers, impact, and support of anxiety in children on the autism spectrum. Simpson et al. (2019) highlighted the value of gaining qualitative data for their study because of its ability to provide rich and in-depth content, and to confirm common themes that parents noted about their children with autism. That said, researchers reflected on the possible misinterpretations and lack of accuracy that parents had on their children's actual experiences and feelings of having autism, and the triggers and anxieties that were felt by children themselves. Researchers agreed that further studies gaining child perspectives along with their parents would produce more well-rounded evidence on the subject as well as expose gaps in parent knowledge about their children's experiences with autism. Simpson et al.'s study further confirms that parents, although able to produce thoughtful insights into their children's behaviors, patterns, and feelings, should not be the only informants on their children's experiences, development, and sense of well-being.

Yet, there do exist some studies in the literature that gathered both the parent and child perspective on how children fared in certain situations and under certain conditions that uncovered more extensive and thorough data. These studies have ranged from parent-child agreement on how certain situations affected children and their well-being to complete disagreement in how certain factors impacted children. One instance of a study that found parent-child agreement on the subject being investigated was Munoz's (2019) study on parent-child perspectives on parents' involvement in their adolescents' organized youth programs. After holding semi-structured interviews with both parents and their children, results gathered a variety of thoughtful answers regarding the type of involvement by parents, the

limitations on parent involvement, and the reasons for parent involvement. The overall consensus

from both children and parents however, found that parents were involved in youth organized

activities an appropriate amount, with parents and children both agreeing that parents were being

as involved as their children wanted them to be. Another study that found relative agreement

among parents and children centered on Virtual Reality in its potential to mitigate medical

trauma within children in an Infusion Center (Easterlin et al., 2020). This study claimed to gather

a more well-rounded picture on whether VR mitigates medical trauma in children by gaining

both the parent's and child's perspectives. Results found large agreement on both the benefits and

challenges of using VR to mitigate medical trauma among parent-child dyads, and also between

parent-child groups. These results proved that not only can parent and child perspectives align on

a subject, but they have the ability to provide greater insight and perspective, resulting in a

deeper understanding of the research subject at hand. Important to note is that Easterlin et al.'s

(2020) study held parent and child interviews together, within the same room. Although

researchers claimed that parent responses were unique and did not seem to influence child

responses, it is important to address that holding interviews together may have swayed answers

and allowed for more agreement among parent-child dyads.

Other studies, however, have found great disagreement among parents and children after

gaining both perspectives on an experience. Wong (2019) interviewed parents and their children

to uncover the benefits and limitations of meditation on children of divorcing couples. While a

majority of parents reported that mediation practices improved their parenting efficiency and

decreased their children's overall stress, children reported that they "felt powerless" during

meditation and felt a lack of support from the meditation mediators. This parent-child study

revealed further benefits of gaining both parent and child perspectives on how children felt in a

certain condition. Parents often think they are attuned to what their children are thinking/feeling, and that they know what is best for their development, however parents often have misconceptions of both their children's perspectives and experiences in certain situations. Felber Charbonneau and Camiré (2018) also found divergence in parent-child perspectives on children's basic psychological needs satisfaction on their parents' involvement in their children's athletics. Overall, reports found that parents were generally able to satisfy their children's basic psychological needs in sport. However, there were also reported incidents of frustration resulting from what appeared to be a lack of communication of expectations from one another. Even more important to the researchers, though, was their ability to gain tangible evidence on the similarities and differences in parent and child perspectives in order to further advance their knowledge on parent involvement in sport. Charbonneau and Camiré conveyed that they valued seeing where parents held misconceptions on what they felt their children desired from their participation in sport versus what children actually wanted from their parents' participation. Identifying these gaps and misconceptions in parent knowledge allowed the researchers to better understand the behaviors athletes preferred of their parents as opposed to what parents thought their child athletes would prefer from them. Charbonneau and Camiré's study further confirmed the importance of gaining both a parent and child perspective when analyzing a child's experience, as there often exists a disconnect between parent and child on what is best for the child's well-being and development.

Some research has gone beyond finding parent-child agreement or disagreement, and has gotten more into the nuances of gaining both perspectives on a subject. Ellen Galinsky's *Ask the Children* (2000) achieved such insight effectively, utilizing numerous child and parent interviews to uncover parent and child perspectives on parents' work and family life. Specifically, the study

sought to uncover how children believed that work affects their parents' lives versus how parents believed their children felt that work affected their parents' lives. One significant difference found between children's feelings versus parents' perceptions of children's feelings was on parent involvement in children's lives. While parents thought that their teenagers felt less inclined to spend time with them and to have parents get involved with their problems or ask about their lives, many teenageers felt oppositely. When pushed further on the subject, teenagers relayed that they recognized why parents may feel this way, and were aware that they do not always express their desire to spend time or talk about things with their parents. Yet, overall they expressed that they desired parent involvement and support, and for help and advice with their "bigger problems." These results revealed the common misunderstandings that can exist among parents and children. While parents may truly understand their children at times, there are many instances where parents misinterpret their children's wants and desires. Gaining both a child and parent perspective within Galinsky's study revealed these gaps, while also allowing for more comprehensive data on the subject at hand as opposed to only gathering one perspective that might not have garnered full insight.

Altogether, these parent-child dyad studies reveal the ability to gain a variety of in-depth answers into a singular topic involving child experiences. Obtaining qualitative evidence from parent and child pairs can open opportunities to gain insightful perspectives, therefore gathering a myriad of meaningful answers on complex issues affecting children. This more nuanced type of data exploration garners authentic and genuine experiences that allow researchers to gain a well-rounded picture of children's experiences, thoughts, and feelings, and more importantly, expose gaps in parent knowledge on what is truly advantageous for their children's PWB and development.

The coronavirus pandemic was a novel moment in time to uncover both the child and parent perspective on children's well-being, as children were faced with widespread isolation from their peers for the first time in their lives. While children may have perceived social isolation, their family dynamics, and other factors as contributing to their psychological health and well-being one way, parents might have had a completely different interpretation on how their children felt. In an opinion piece, Chris Colin (2020) detailed how he and other parents alike became burdened with panic over their children's basic well-being, and how these unprecedented times might affect their children's development. Specifically, he confessed, "I just feel like growing up in all of this is going to be incredibly unmooring for them.'" While many parents expressed concern for their children during the pandmeic more than ever before, it will be meaningful to see if their worries and fears were legitimate or rather misled. In other words, parents might have had certain perceptions on how children's isolation and newfound activities and routines disrupted or altered their development. Meanwhile, what parents thought to have been optimal for their children may or may not have been optimal for them in reality.

Present Research

The previous research described the experiences that children in their later childhood years can have when they are individually isolated from their peers, and the many factors that may also be at play, influencing the effects of said isolation. What the pre-pandemic literature could not uncover, however, was what isolation can be like for children who all experience it at the same time (i.e., during a period of widespread isolation). Parents, educators, and psychologists in the earlier stages of the coronavirus pandemic attempted to address and/or perform this type of research. Some posted articles about their observations of children in the beginning of the pandemic, and made predictions on how long-term widespread social isolation

could impact children in various ways, such as their depressive symptoms (McClurg, 2020) their

shyness around others (Bader, 2020) and their frustrations with online school (Natanson &

Meckler, 2020). These pieces, however, were small scale, taking place in the early stages of the

coronavirus pandemic, and hearing from only a handful of children on these issues. It would be

more useful to gain a wider array of child testimony on a variety of subjects as the pandemic

wore on, in order to get a more well-rounded picture of children's experiences during the

pandemic once they had been experiencing the effects of widespread social isolation for an

extended period of time.

Meanwhile, some researchers attempted to study how the early stages of widespread

isolation were related to the PWB of children in their later childhood years through quantifiable

measures. For example, Xie et al. (2020) measured the psychological impacts of social isolation

on students in grades two through six quarantining in Wuhan, China, through quantitative

surveys. The surveys found that 22.6% of students in quarantine had depressive symptoms,

which was higher than students' depressive symptoms within primary schools in China in

pre-pandemic investigations (17.2%). Xie et al. theorized in their discussion that two crucial

factors contributing to these elevated depression levels may be the reduction of outdoor activities

and social interaction that these children were going through during the pandemic, a prediction in

line with prior research on the importance of socialization and peer activities for children and

adolescents (Oberle, Ji, Guhn, Schonert-Reichl, & Gadermann, 2019). However, Xie et al.

collected their data through only the means of quantitative surveying, a data collection method

that did not allow children to elaborate on the extent to which they felt impacted by their

experiences in social isolation, or to discuss other factors that may have been at play in

impacting their state of well-being. Xie et al.'s research also took place in the earlier stages of the

pandemic, and was unable to capture the more long-term effects of children's experiences as they faced widespread isolation. To gain a well-rounded picture of what a children's lives are like during the pandemic, further, more exploratory research must be done.

The present research sought to gain both the child and parent perspectives of children in their later childhood years who had been living in widespread isolation for an extended period of time due to the coronavirus pandemic. Through interview and discussion, I aimed to uncover how these children felt that their lives were being impacted by the lack of peer socialization and how family dynamics and connectedness played a role in their isolation experiences, while also gaining a picture of the other variables that may have been influencing them in real and significant ways. How did children feel about school when their learning was limited to a computer screen? How did children in strict home environments feel about their drastic increase in family time? What did children have to say about their friendships when in-person social interactions were extremely limited? Further, the current research sought to gain children's parents' perspectives on this subject as it was of interest to compare how children believed the period of widespread isolation, their family life, and a variety of other variables affected their PWB to how their parents felt these factors affected their PWB. Maybe the factors that worried parents about their children's current isolation levels, behaviors, and routines aligned with the factors that children believed were afflicting them, or perhaps the opposite. Through gaining both the parent and child perspective on children's experiences through qualitative research, I aspired to uncover how children in their late childhood years felt during a time of widespread social isolation, and how parents perceived and offered insight into their children's experiences during this unique period in history.

Method

Participants

The participants consisted of children who ranged from 9 to 12 years of age, and one parent of each child. I piloted the interview questions with two families, with each family having two child participants and one parent participant. For the official study, I interviewed 32 families in total. Interviews included six families that had two child participants, with one of these families having no parent participant. The remainder of the interviews consisted of one child participant and one parent participant. In total there were 38 child and 31 parent participants.

Of the 38 child participants, there were eight 9-year-olds, nine 10-year-olds, seven 11-year olds, and ten 12-year-olds. There were 19 female child participants, 19 male child participants, 27 female parent participants, and 4 male parent participants. Of the total 38 child participants, 32 were White, 4 were Asian, and 2 identified as mixed race. Of the 31 total parent participants, 29 were White and 2 were Asian. Of the 32 families that participated, fourteen were from Montgomery County, Maryland, which has an average house value of $540,373; nine were from Fairfax County, Virginia, which has an average house value of $645,358; two were from Alameda County, California ($1,014,404); one was from Marin County, California ($1,334,712); one was from King County, Washington ($733,746); one was from Washington County, DC, ($678,709); one was from Essex County, New Jersey ($470,752); one from Kitsap County, Washington, ($468,397); one from Lake County, Illinois ($270,163); one from Cook County, Illinois ($276,354); and one from Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania ($212,686).

Each child participant was attending a school that was completely online from the fall of 2020 through the time that they were interviewed. All children were eligible to participate in the research except for those diagnosed with anxiety and/or depression. As interviews specifically

inquired about children's anxiety levels before the pandemic versus during the pandemic, it was thought that children with pre-existing diagnoses could have influenced findings on this topic. Importantly, I did not exclude children diagnosed with ADHD, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyslexia, or non-verbal learning cues from participating in this study. I wanted to be able to include participants with these types of learning disabilities and/or disorders to allow myself the opportunity to hear a variety of perspectives on online school, and how the potential of utilizing learning accommodations could affect the online school experience. I captured this information within my parent interviews in order to note whether or not the child had one or more of these learning disabilities or disorders, and which they were. In total, three children had ADHD and one child had slow processing.

I recruited participants through social media, LinkedIn, and word of mouth. When recruiting via social media and LinkedIn, the recruiting information stated my thesis topic, the demographics of the participants that I was looking for, my exclusionary criteria, and how the participants would schedule an interview with me. The exclusionary criteria, clearly stated, detailed that I had to exclude children with a diagnosed clinical mental health disorder, except those diagnosed with ADHD. The recruiting information can be found in Appendix A.

Materials

The parent interview schedule included eleven scripted, open-ended questions. I piloted these questions with two parents in order to ensure that the questions on the final interview schedule were strong, relevant, and were able to provide further insight into the parent perspective on their children's PWB during the coronavirus pandemic. The pilot interviews confirmed the strength and relevancy of the parent interview questions, and no changes were made. The draft interview schedule for parents can be found in Appendix B.

The child interview schedule consisted of ten scripted, open-ended questions. I piloted these interview questions with four children before I held the actual interviews so that I knew which questions are strong, relevant, and accessible to children, and which should be adapted to gain more relevant data. As with the parent interviews, the child pilot interviews confirmed the strength and relevancy of the child interview questions, and no changes were made. The draft interview schedule for children can be found in Appendix C.

Compensation for participating in this research was provided in the form of a raffle, with two winners of a $25 Panera Bread gift card awarded at random.

Procedure

When interviewing, I interviewed each child and parent separately in their own individual rooms so that they were out of earshot from each other. Before beginning the interviews, I received Informed Consent from the parent for their own interview, and separate Informed Consent for their child's interview. I also told the parent that their and their children's identities will be kept fully confidential, explaining that, while I will be fully aware of all of my participants' identities, their identities will not be disclosed in any way to the public nor to my thesis advisor. Only I was aware of each individual's identifying information, and I did not record this information in any way within the thesis. Rather, to keep track of each participant, they were each given a coded identification number.

I interviewed either the parent or the child, depending on who wanted to go first. Before beginning the parent interview, I obtained their verbal consent. The parent verbal consent script can be found in Appendix D. I asked all parent participants the open-ended questions in a semi-structured format, meaning that the order and/or number of questions were often altered. The parent questions addressed their perspective of their child's life during this time of school

closures and isolation, as indicated on the interview schedule. The parent interviews lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Once the interview concluded, I verbally debriefed the parent and answered any questions they may have had. The verbal parent debriefing script can be found in Appendix E. I told the parent that they would also receive a combined child and parent debriefing form as soon as I concluded the interviews.

Before interviewing each child, I obtained verbal assent from the child. The child verbal assent script can be found in Appendix F. I then held a semi-structured interview similar to the format of the parent interviews. Each interview lasted about 15 to 25 minutes long. Once the interview concluded, I verbally debriefed the child, and answered any questions they may have had. The child debriefing script can be found in Appendix G. Once interviews ended, I sent the parent the combined parent and child debriefing form. The combined child and parent debriefing form can be found in Appendix H. I video recorded each interview using Zoom's recording feature. Recorded interviews were stored on my locked, password-protected computer, specifically within my password-protected Google Drive account. All recordings were tagged with coded numbers with no identifying information attached. I transcribed all interviews into writing through the transcription software, Otter.ai, and kept all interview transcriptions in this same location. Once all interviews were transcribed, I deleted the video interviews. The transcriptions were tagged with code numbers and were retained until the completion of the thesis process for further analyses.

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived impact on the psychological well-being (PWB) of children ages 9 to 12 years from widespread isolation set in place because of the coronavirus pandemic. Following semi-structured interviews with both children and a

parent of each child, emergent themes were coded using a Grounded Theory Approach in NVivo 12 (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). All interviews focused on the topics of isolation from peers and family connectedness. From there, each departed in their own different directions, delving deeper into certain categories that each child and parent felt greatly affected them the most, or that they most preferred to discuss. After each interview was conducted, the transcripts were imported into NVivo, where the early stages of coding began. Initial coding revealed certain themes that aligned with the topics originally discussed within this study's Introduction. These themes were initially marked as major themes, with numerous sub-themes emerging underneath each one. As the interviews continued, however, some sub-themes emerged more frequently to the point that they became major themes themselves. Meanwhile, some themes that were originally major themes emerged instead as sub-themes. The themes can be found in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively.

Themes

The overall results of the study indicated that children in this sample were highly resilient and adaptable; therefore the overarching theme is "Resilience and Adaptation." While many factors affected and contributed to different aspects of children's PWB, interviewees indicated that children were able to adjust to the situations with which they were presented and the conditions set in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. Under the overarching theme of "Resilience and Adaptation," five other major themes were found to contribute most prominently to children's PWB during the coronavirus pandemic. The major themes are "Staying Connected," "Family Support," "Online School," "Routine," and "Anxiety." Each of these major themes has its own unique sub-themes, with some sub-themes containing sub-sub themes, depending on how

many specific categories children and parents discussed with each topic. The final table of all of the themes can be found in the Appendix (Table 1).

Both parent and child perspectives were gathered for the study. Advantageously, parents offered another layer of insight, understanding, and empathy into their children's lives during this time. Parents spoke to their children's thoughts and feelings on certain subjects that their child/children themselves would most likely not be able to relay themselves, as well as discussed the various ways that they helped them adjust to the struggles they witnessed their children facing. Parents also spoke to how they believed living through the coronavirus pandemic will impact their child/children's development and their future. Because of this added insight from parents, "Parental Insight Into Children's Experiences and Long-Term Pandemic Impacts" was also separately coded as an overarching theme in addition to "Resilience and Adaptation." This theme has two major themes, "Parents Being Aware of Their Children's Feelings & Being Receptive to Them," and "How Parents Think That Covid Will Affect Children's Development and/or Future." Each of these major themes has its own unique sub-themes. The final table containing these themes can be found in the Appendix (Table 2).

Overarching Theme: Resilience and Adaptation

The overarching theme is "Resilience and Adaptation." Every child and parent interview always came back to the concept of being able to adapt to the current situation, and to accept the highs and lows that came with the unique circumstances during this time of widespread isolation. When asked how they would describe their overall well-being at the end of each interview, 100% of children reported that as a whole, they were neither much better off, nor much worse, during the pandemic than they were before. When asked how they were feeling overall since the pandemic began, some of the children gave the following responses:

"Well, I'm kind of happy because, like, right in the middle of the Coronavirus, I was sad because [...] we were just figuring out what we could do. And now, we're used to it. So now it's just like, normal. And when the Coronavirus ends it's gonna be crazy, because we're going to be used to wearing masks everywhere. And when it ends, we will not have to wear masks anymore. And then we'll have to get used to regular life again." - Child 5

"[...] in the beginning I had a lot of meltdowns [...] And it all of a sudden went from tons of social time to a lot of family time. And so I think from the beginning of COVID, I've definitely, like, had a different mindset. At the beginning, like the day when they were closing school, I was like, 'Oh my gosh, people are so overreacting. We're gonna be back in a month.' And then I started getting way more frustrated. And now I'm kind of just like, rolling with it." - Child 20

"It's okay. I would still prefer no Coronavirus, but it's okay. It's not as bad as [...] other families are having it. I mean, we're like, we're doing well. We're not doing bad. And everyone in our family's fine. So I wouldn't say it's been that bad for us. But I would still rather prefer, you know, no Coronavirus." - Child 29

While the children within this study adapted to their circumstances and proved resilient throughout, interviews also uncovered five major themes that greatly impacted their experiences, and contributed to their PSW during this period of widespread isolation. The five themes are "Staying Connected," "Family Connectedness," "Online School," "Routine," and "Anxiety."

Staying Connected.

Despite many obstacles that barred children from seeing each other in person (e.g., school closures, extracurricular activity cancelations, isolation orders), children and families were able to get creative in how they stayed connected. There were two primary ways children stayed connected: "In Person" and "Online."

In Person.

There were three primary ways in which children and parents reported they stayed connected to friends and peers in person: "Pods," "Social Distancing," and "Extracurricular Activities."

__Pods__

21% of children reported actively being in a pod, or groups of two or three families that agreed to socialize with only each other during this period of widespread isolation (Moyer, 2020). Pods were a popular phenomena during the pandemic, especially for families with younger children, as many parents agreed that children greatly benefitted from in-person close contact peer interaction. It was commonly reported among children in pods that being able to see their friends in person frequently made their lives feel more similar to pre-COVID times, and helped them feel confident in their current relationships with their friends:

> *"Um, it's like similar, because, um, we're in, like, a pod, so we can go in each other's houses and interact with each other [...] yeah, it's not too much of a change. I hang out with them all the time." - Child 4*

One child even reported feeling closer to her friends than before, as being in a pod during a time when school was closed allowed her to see her friends more often in settings outside of school:

> "I feel like now I have stronger relationships because I can like, talk to them more and stuff like that. But before [...] I didn't do as much with them and I didn't, like, know them as well as I do now." - Child 3

A handful of parents also spoke on this matter in relaying how sometimes, one has to make sacrifices on behalf of their child's socioemotional health:

> "So I mean, it was hard because in the beginning [...] we were really worried and it was unknown. We were locked down. I mean, we really didn't, he didn't do sleepovers. [...] But as time went on, and we realized his emotional and social emotional health was more important, we let some things go, and we let him see friends face to face and do sleepovers and that kind of thing. And took our chance." - Parent 27

Social Distancing

Social distancing was one common method children used to connect with each other during the coronavirus pandemic. Rather than go into each other's homes or have any type of physical contact, social distancing required children to play with one another outdoors and

physically distant. Children reported both the drawbacks and the benefits of spending time with

their friends in this way.

Not Ideal.

47% of children in this study reported that this form of spending time with friends was

unnatural and not ideal, and forced their time together to be shorter and limited. Rather, they

preferred seeing their friends indoors and being allowed to have physical contact:

> "Well, we still play outside. So I play outside for two to three hours with my
> friends. And like, we [...] can do social distancing, [...] I mean, it's fine. But you
> know, I kind of wish I could see, like, more friends, because I see friends that are
> like, our neighbor friends… but I can't see my school friends."- Child 30

> "[...] I can't see my friends, we have to like, wear masks and like social distance
> when, even if it's like my family, not like my family inside but like my grandma
> or something like that. Yeah, that's a little bit sad." - Child 34

Parents also offered their thoughts, agreeing with their children that social distancing was

not an optimal form of spending time together:

> "[They] have these outdoor play dates occasionally. And again, not really right
> now. But, um, that's not, I don't know, like the outdoor stuff with masks, it just
> feels... Again, they make the best of it. But it's not authentic. It's not like when
> you and I were younger, or obviously I'm older than you, but like, when I would
> meet up with my friends as a kid was a different, obviously, different way of
> playing." - Parent 30

Helping to Manage the Situation.

Although children often reported that social distancing was not as ideal as seeing their

friends in close contact and within their homes and other indoor settings, 47% of kids talked

about how beneficial it was to be able to see their friends in-person at all, and for some to

consistently get to see their friends in this way. Overall, children and parents acknowledged that

this form of hanging out was manageable as a temporary solution to their current situation:

> "Now it's a little bit more dependent upon it being a good weather day. And, you
> know, with the winter months, and the higher numbers again [...] But we still, you

know, she still has friends that she's able to get together with. They did, you know, a whole day together wearing masks for 11 hours between, you know, their ballet and an outing we did, and, and a video watching that they did, but they all wore masks. So, again, is it what she would want? No. Is it making a bad situation less bad? Yes." - Parent 20

"Um, but now we kind of just like, walk around to all places. Like, we'll be like, oh, let's go to Crum Creek now, which is just a little park that's right by my house.[...] we do it like every day. So it's nice that we can all just walk around." Child 25

Extracurricular Activities

34% of children said they were doing some type of after school organized extracurricular activity that involved them being on a team or interacting with children in some way. Children and parents alike agreed that participating in extracurricular activities facilitated a good amount of socialization. One parent even said that extracurricular activities were seen as a "saving grace" for kids during this time where they did not get daily peer and friend interaction in other ways such as school (Parent 3). When Child 13 was asked if the activities he currently participated in was a good way to spend time with friends during the pandemic, he said:

"Definitely, definitely [...] I was spending a good amount of time with them during these activities.

Many parents who signed their kids up for a seasonal sport during the pandemic noticed the changes in their children and the happiness that weekly socialization brought them:

"But you know [...] this is why we're so happy that she is able to socialize with some kids, right? She's not becoming a total wreck, [...] she's not having to convert her entire social life to online. You know, we feel [...] very lucky in that regard."- Parent 9

Many more children had similar responses saying that they enjoyed going to these activities (Child 12, Child 22, Child 31) and that it was "good for them" (Child 4). Being part of a team and spending time with children through organized activities allowed children to stay

connected with friends and foster socialization during a time when in-person peer interactions

was limited.

Electronically.

Children also adapted to widespread isolation by utilizing various forms of electronic

devices to stay in touch with each other. The two primary ways children connected electronically

were playing video games with each other, and FaceTime and Google Chatting each other.

Video Games

34% of children said they used video games as a way to stay in touch with friends during

this time. Video games were a way for children to play with each other and bond over a shared

activity, a virtue that children were not able to do as often during the pandemic when indoor

activities were far and few, and even nonexistent to some:

> "[After school] I usually just start playing video games [...] with my friends [...]
> So when I do that, it's actually really fun because, um, well, because sometimes
> we will email in our morning class, so we can play video games together after
> school." - Child 12

Although children acknowledged that online communication and game playing was not

the ideal form of hanging out with friends, many children said that they enjoyed playing video

games with friends to both stay in touch and be able to do some type of activity or game with

them:

> "[...] it's kind of a way for me and my [...] friends to keep in touch [...] it's really
> fun to catch up with my friends and play with them." - Child 10"

Especially during a time when children's social circles were smaller, most parents

reported that video games allowed their children to connect to a wider range of people:

> "He's been able to like, stay in touch with cousins that way. He has [...] a very
> close friend that lives in [...] Arlington. And we like you know, when we used to
> see them we would do sleepovers. And of course now we can't do that. So they
> play video games and like, you know, call each other and he even has a friend

from Hard Rock that moved to Kenya, and that child plays with them [...] like depending on if the time difference works out, like sometimes he joins them too. So [...] I think it has kind of widened the people that he stays in touch with." - Parent 10

FaceTime and Google Chat

45% of children reported being on some type of messaging and video chatting app (i.e.

FaceTime, Facebook Messenger Kids, Google Chat). Kids and parents alike noted the benefits of

these applications in allowing children to talk to their friends and extended family daily:

"FaceTime has been, like, my Savior. And texting, I recently got to do like, a gift exchange with two different groups of friends. And we just got on for like an hour and a half and opened up our gifts." - Child 20

"You know, and I look at her two friends from ballet, which are not school involved, and they're very close, they probably spend a lot of time texting and FaceTiming, more so than they would have done if it was just [a] normal [year] [...] They'd become very reliant upon getting on the FaceTime and having those conversations." - Parent 20

One child summarized how her FaceTime usage throughout the pandemic brought her

and her friends closer than in previous years:

"But then at the beginning of quarantine, we all kind of got really bored and all our friends were doing [...] other stuff. And so we started FaceTiming. And now we FaceTime like, pretty much every day because we get so bored. And so yeah, and because of that, I guess we've like, gotten closer! And so we're able to connect more and like, hang out more [...] they're really good people. And so it like, it makes me happy to know that like, you know, if I have a problem, sometimes I don't like, if it's a problem that I don't want to talk to my parents about [...] you can really, like, get all your feelings out without them judging you. Because we all have the same issues." - Child 16

Family Support.

The second major theme coded was Family Support. It was believed that during a time of

restricted peer contact, children would rely more heavily on their families for a sense of connection and

bonding than they would under typical conditions. Although children noted that spending time with

family did not bring them the exact same satisfaction that spending time with friends did, overall,

children reported that having their family during this time at least partly made up for their limited peer interaction, and thus contributed to adequate PWB levels. Under Family Support, three sub-themes were coded, some of which have sub-sub themes. The first sub-theme is "Family Connectedness." The sub-sub themes here are "Greater Bonding with Family," "Having a Sibling," and "Having a Pet." The second sub-theme is "Parents Giving Children Autonomy." The third sub-theme is "Caveats," and comes with two sub-sub themes, "Too Much Family Time," and "Family Not Being a Permanent Replacement for Friends." The former two sub-themes are ones that were beneficial to children, and the last sub-theme describes factors that did not necessarily bolster children's PWB in a time of limited peer interaction.

Family Connectedness.

There were three factors related to family connectedness that children felt supported their PWB during a time of limited peer interaction: "Greater Bonding," "Having a Sibling," and "Having a Pet."

Greater Family Bonding

92% of children claimed to have gotten closer with their family during the pandemic. While children were home more hours of the day than ever before, and with their schedules aligning with their parents' more frequently as well, many children noted how they got more opportunities to bond with their parents and siblings, and therefore grew their relationships:

> "Well, we've been getting along a little better than we did before, because now we have to live with each other. Like we don't go to school, and [...] we're like, right next to each other. [...] And it's just been much better. Because usually we like started to fight every second but now we just have time to play." - Child 30

> "I would say, I definitely think, you know, it's, it feels a little cliche to say, but the one silver lining of COVID times is that it's brought family, you know, family time to the forefront. We spend so much more time together, the four of us than we did before. And I think that's a really good thing. I think it presents challenges. I'm, I'm a stay at home mom. My husband is self employed. And I used to do a lot more work for him. But since the kids have been home, I haven't had the bandwidth to do that [...] I'd say we're closer than we've ever been." - Parent 30

Because children's parents had to work remotely, they were home much more often than during a

typical work-year where they may have had to work in an office or travel for business. As a result, many

of the parents in the sample got the chance to attend more to their children and to truly spend more

quality time with them:

> "I definitely love the family time I get with them. During the school days, I'm in my room, most of the time during school, being online. And after that, I'll play with my brothers or play with my mom or my dad. My dad also works during the day, he's usually working from home now. But at night, we'll like, play ping pong, or we'll go outside and play or even, like, watching a movie together. Yeah, I think I have a very good relationship with my parents as well." - Child 28

> "[...] it was getting to a point where [my husband] was traveling quite a bit. But he doesn't have that now that he's home. So I think in that sense, like, it's nice for them to have him home more [...] the second he walks in, they're like, 'How long are you free?' [...] Or 'How many minutes do you have?' Because then they're like, 'can you throw some baseball [...] can you do this? Can we play, you know, do headers?' [...] they just do this random stuff like these games that they've made up. So I think in that sense, it's been good for them to have that time with him, where he's not like, just traveling or busy with work." - Parent 27

Having a sibling

63% of children discussed the benefits of having a sibling during a time where they were not

able to see their friends often or in close contact. They reported that being around their siblings more has

also brought them closer together and has allowed them greater opportunities to bond:

> "Since we can't see friends as much, then it's good to have people to socialize with when [...] you can only see your friends through a screen. So I think it's good to have siblings to hang out with when you need to." - Child 28

Many parents also observed for themselves the benefits that having a constant playmate

during this time of widespread isolation had on their children, as it greatly contributed to their

child's socio emotional health, and improved relations among siblings:

> "Yeah, they, because they spend so much time together that I've noticed that they play more together. And their [...] bickering and fighting almost in some ways has gone down. I mean, they still do it. They're two years apart. So they're relatively close in age, but they

definitely spend more time playing, like [...] we have this table with all these Legos on it, and they play Legos like they play characters *with* the Legos, and I can tell, yeah, I just feel they're like just socializing with each other more. And again, more playing together."
- Parent 11

Having a pet

26% of children acknowledged the benefits of having a pet as another type of playmate during widespread isolation. More families have not only been spending more time with their pets, but families have also adopted pets this year as opposed to other years:

"There's silver Linings and that kind of stuff in it. They got a puppy, which they've been trying to talk me into getting a puppy for like 10 years. Um, you know, [...] They're fine." - Parent 28

"And we would not walk the dogs as much before because we got a COVID puppy. So we didn't, we didn't have a puppy. [...] I like all the bonding time I get to spend with my family and our dogs." - Child 35

Having a pet also seemed to be a crucial component for only children, as they did not have siblings at their disposal with whom they could play with regularly. Child 24 and her mother both commented on how crucial their dog had been to support her well-being and socialization while being an only child during the pandemic:

"Well, the surrogate is actually the dog down here. He is taking a hit for the team. We joke, he is Child 24's best friend. She spends a lot of time with him. He's moved into her room. Previously, he did not sleep in her room, but now they're always together." - Parent 24

"And I've been spending a lot more time with my dog. And yeah, and my mom always jokes that I'm his favorite." - Child 24

Parents Giving Children Autonomy.

Another way families, and parents in particular, contributed to greater child PWB during the pandemic was to give children more autonomy and independence. Parents found that by giving their children more freedom to make decisions for themselves, children felt more in control of their lives during a time of constant change and disruption:

"Um, you know, she eats when she wants, she can come out and heat something up. She takes a shower, she does her homework, you know, when she feels like it works better for her to do her homework [...] So, um, and she, you know [...] she's a pretty independent kid. Anyway, she's the kid that will go order by herself. And, you know, if I gave her money, she would go into the store and get it on her own. So I think she likes that aspect." - Parent 19

When asked how she feels about the amount of family time she has and about the

activities she does with them, Child 20 said:

"Um, it depends on the day [...] like last night, I was offered, 'Do you want to bake cookies? Or do you want to just like, go do your own thing?' And I [...] wasn't really feeling like hanging out. So I usually, like, know my limits. So when, like, I want to see someone or interact, and when I just want to go do my own thing."

Parent 11 also conveyed the importance of children being able to learn more about themselves

during their time in isolation, and to be given the freedom to try new things:

"[...] last spring, I think the kids have learned to fend for themselves a little bit more, and like [my child] in particular, has learned to cook. And she cooks a lot more now. So like, she'll make meals for the family. She really loves that [...] so I think that's something that [...] she's doing more of, that she wouldn't have done as much of if we hadn't been in this situation." - Parent 11

Caveats.

Family and family connectedness contributed to healthy child PWB during the period of

widespread social isolation. However, children also described common instances in which family time

became overwhelming, or where families were not able to completely make up for their feelings of

loneliness or of isolation.

Too Much Family Time

While children became closer to their families during a year when they spent larger quantities of

time at home, it was also natural that many felt the stressors that came with extended family time and

being cooped up with the same people for days on end. 37% of children said they experienced moments

where they felt like they've had too much family time, and described how these moments contributed to

well-being challenges:

> "COVID has got us all cooped up, me and my mom, even my dad. Yesterday, we got into a big argument. Just everything feels like, you know, like, every day I'm going to just get annoyed. And that, like, it starts out good. And people are at high speeds. But then, by the end of the day, we're raging at each other [...] Like, that's the one part of COVID that's really affecting my life is the family part." - Child 6

> "And she's been very good about [...] recognizing, you know, the difficult pieces that come with having to be out of pocket and coming and going and managing some of the stresses going on, on that end of things. But yes, she would certainly prefer to have some more time with her friends and away from us [...] and certainly, space from her brother, who she says is very loud." - Parent 20

One child even teared up when asked about how she has felt having greater amounts of

family time:

> "It's just like, a lot of family time, like we're always together [...] Okay, so, um, it's [...] yeah, I'm always together with them. And it's good. Like, I like seeing them [...] and stuff. But, sometimes I just need to like, go to my room and take a break from them." - Child 25

Family Not Being a Permanent Replacement for Friends

Although children expressed gratitude for having their families as social outlets during a

time when they have minimal in-person contact with friends, 50% of children admitted that they

could only handle their situations temporarily. These children conveyed that ideally they would

have a more even distribution of time between their family and their friends, and that spending

time with family alone does not entirely make up for their limited amounts of time with their

friend:

> "I mean, I like hanging out with my family and all that, but sometimes I feel like I want to be with someone my own age. And just like doing stuff that we could do, or I don't know how to explain it, but like, I'm the youngest in my family. So [...] there's no one that's around my age. And my sisters, [...] they're a lot older than me, and they have, like, a lot of other stuff that they do. So sometimes I'm like, just by myself, or like, I don't know, I just wish I was doing something that I wanted, with a friend." - Child 14

Parents also acknowledged that their children can only rely on their families for social interaction to a point, and that time spent with family does not bring children the same type of fulfilment that peers and friends bring them:

> "I think it's beneficial. I don't think there's a parallel between the benefits of her time with her peer group and her friends, and her time with her siblings. I think those are two very different types of relationships, socially and emotionally, to have to navigate [...] And I just think the familiarity of familial relationships is different than all of the benefits of, you know, a diverse group of kids having to establish relationships with each other. I think, I just think they're totally different things." - Parent 16

Online School.

Children reported both negative and positive elements regarding the "Academics" and "Social Elements" of online school. These two categories were broken up into three themes: "Cons," "Pros," and "Bettering the Situation," respectively, each coming with their own sub-themes. Children's opinions on the academic side of online school will be relayed first, followed by children's thoughts on the social aspects of online school.

Two other themes also emerged under "Online School." One of these themes, "Children With an IEP/504 Plan," was created due to the sample containing four children who utilized either an IEP or 504 plan, as their "Pros" and "Cons" were specific to their learning from the rest of the sample. The other theme, "Gratitude for In-Person School," was created due to the array of responses children gave over their gratitude for in-person schooling after having experienced virtual learning for an extended period of time. These two themes will be addressed after discussing "Academics" and "Social Elements."

Academics.

Children found cons, pros, and factors that helped better their situations of attending virtual school.

<u>*Cons*</u>

Two sub-sub themes emerged under "Cons" of the academic side of online school:

"Schooling Virtually/Technology & Communication Difficulties," and "Not as Engaging or

Meaningful as In-Person School."

Schooling Virtually/Technology & Communication Difficulties.

63% of children discussed their difficulties with attending classes on a screen and the

technology and communication issues that arose because of online education. Children reported

having difficulty understanding material when conveyed online, being frustrated trying to

navigate a new and complex system, and feeling helpless or lost in situations where they needed

help, but could not effectively communicate from behind a screen:

> "Um, it's definitely probably harder. Because like, if you have a question in class
> [...] the teacher, she can't, like physically help you with this, she can't be like,
> okay, this is that, and a lot of times, like, she'll glitch up or like, she can't hear me
> [...] and she'll be like, I can't hear you [...] And it's definitely really like, kind of
> embarrassing, when, like, you can't hear and you ask a question. And she's like,
> 'Okay, we've already answered that question, you should have better listening.'
> And I'm like, I couldn't hear it [...] So how would I know? And that was... it
> makes you feel a little bad." - Child 1

> "I think he feels a little alone. I don't know if he would describe it that way or not,
> but, but he gets frustrated easily when he's trying to work on something. And, you
> know, I think he's used to being able to go right up to the teacher, and kind of
> asking her privately, 'What am I supposed to be doing? I don't understand.'
> Whereas instead, now, he's just by himself, he doesn't feel- I try to get him to, you
> know, raise his hand and ask the teacher. But he doesn't like to do that. And so he
> gets very frustrated and upset when he can't figure something out, or if it seems
> hard to him." - Parent 17

Not as Engaging or Meaningful as In-Person School.

47% of children reported being disappointed in the inability of online school to convey

the material in an engaging or meaningful way. These children found online school boring and

reported feeling less passionate about their learning than they would in a typical year of

in-person school. These children compared their experiences in online school to that of a typical

school year, noting how much more effective in-person school was than online school at

engaging students in meaningful lessons:

> "So back then, I definitely enjoyed school because we had a lot more meaningful
> subjects [...] all we've done now is just reading analysis, and it's been pretty
> annoying [...] I wouldn't say it's more challenging but I would say it's just like,
> less actual, like labs and stuff where you actually like, do hands-on material. And
> it's more just like studying and studying information, which is a lot of what school
> used to be, but now just like, much more [...] it's much more hands off and just
> like doing school [...] it's just like less captivating and less enriching, and more
> just like doing work." - Child 26

Parents also found that their children often had more trouble concentrating during virtual

school than they would in an in-person classroom. These parents recognized that their children's

lack of concentration was due to the difficulty children had with focusing on school from their

homes, as well as how unengaging it can be to learn through a screen:

> "It's really hard [...] I think it's really easy for [...] both of them [...] to kind of go
> into like Daydream land. Because she's bored [...] she's in a room, you know, she's
> at her desk. It's like, do I want to talk about division? Or do I want to like, doodle
> or do something like that. So I think it's really easy to get distracted. And just find
> yourself daydreaming." - Parent 30

Pros

Children experienced many hardships and frustrations caused by the academic side of

online school. Among all of the adjustments that kids had to make to virtual learning, however,

children also highlighted one benefit of schooling from home, "More Freedom in Learning

Environment."

More Freedom In Learning Environment.

24% of children said they felt that virtual school allowed them to have more freedom

over their learning. These children were able to work at a pace that best suited them, could focus

on their assignments in a quiet environment, and were able to utilize focusing strategies that an

in-person classroom usually does not allow:

> "When we're sent out to do our own independent work, I think it's easier to focus
> on that because there's not like someone to look over at, even if no one's talking.
> Like you could just stare at someone. It's really just like your own room, and you
> can't see the other person on the screen. So I think it's easier to focus on
> independent work." - Child 20

> "I think she likes being in her room. I think she likes having, you know, her stuff
> around her. And, um, you know, she has said specifically that she likes taking the
> tests at home because she doesn't feel like people are looking at her. [...] I know
> that she, she likes to listen to books on her Kindle. And I know that a lot of times
> during class, she's listening to her book, too. And I'm like, you know, as long as
> you get done what you need to get done, if that's what gets you through the day,
> great, you know [...] listening to books is not a terrible thing." - Parent 19

Bettering the Situation

One theme emerged within the interviews that was not necessarily a benefit of online

school, but was one that helped children manage virtual learning: having good teachers.

Good Teachers.

One crucial factor that lent children to having better virtual learning experiences than

others was having quality teachers. 24% of children and their parents credited teachers with

children having positive learning experiences while having to do school online. They described

good teachers as those who were engaging, attentive to students, and who tried their best to

simulate an in-person classroom environment:

> "My teacher is doing a very good job of making school fun for us and having like,
> sharing times during our class meetings. And he'll have us do group work. If he
> can, like [...] we're either allowed to just go into breakout groups and talk to our
> friends while we're working. Or we have group work where we can socialize to
> work during math or language arts. It is not as likable as in person school, but I
> think that my teachers are making it fun and enjoyable for us." - Child 28

"We've been blessed. His teacher is amazing. She's always available if I have questions, and she's always there to give us help and extra resources because she sees that, I think she sees that he's not working up to his full potential." - Parent 27

Social Elements.

Children found cons, pros, and factors that benefited their situation regarding the lack of social interaction in online school.

Cons

Three sub-sub themes emerged under "Cons" of the social side of online school: "Losing Friends/Not Making Friends," "Not Seeing Close Friends Everyday," and "Not Getting Daily Peer Interaction."

Losing Friends/Not Making Friends.

29% of children said that they found difficulty maintaining friendships with their school friends, as well as forming new friendships in school. Children claimed that this was due to the inaccessibility of communicating through a screen, and not being able to physically be in class with their peers. They relayed their frustrations in not being able to talk to their classmates in the same way that they would be able to in an in-person class setting, and their resulting disappointment in not being able to make friends, or in becoming less close with their friends, due to this barrier:

"I feel like, um, it's more of a negative not really seeing them, because like, most people, like they never really turn on their camera. So [...] it's like, it's really hard to make, like, new friends online, because you saw a lot of interaction. [...] So I mean, so I feel like it's more of a negative online, like connecting with your peers." - Child 23

"I think the things he finds hard about it are just, he doesn't know everybody in each class. And, you know, kids aren't [...] required, nor are they willing to keep their cameras on. And so there's not a lot of, he hasn't made any new friends. You know, all of his friends this year are the friends he had prior, you know, [...] to the

school year. But so yeah, so that's just different, like socialization wise in school is totally different." - Parent 23

Not Seeing Close Friends Everyday.

29% of children said that they struggled with not being able to see their close friends in-person every day. Being home from school not only meant not being in a classroom with friends, but not having lunch or recess or in between class times with friends. Children had to go from at least one informal interaction with friends a day to almost zero. Online school incorporated features such as breakout rooms in order for students to socialize with one another, but according to a large selection of interviewees, these attempts were not an adequate medium to foster interaction with close friends:

> "[...] it's like they're gone. And I think that's a big thing, because I'm only seeing some of my friends on zoom. And I don't even see that many. So it sort of feels like it's not school lunch anymore. And it just feels more academic. And I think part of the reason school is so tolerable for kids, it wasn't just academics, it was that they got to see their friends, and I feel like it feels more isolated. Now [...] I see some of my friends, they're on a computer screen, and I don't see most of my friends because they're all in different schools." - Child 6

> "But they're missing the, all day interactions with their friends. I think, you know, the chit chat time like at recess or at lunch or in between what they're doing in school, or just while they're working, chit chatting. All of their [...] teachers have worked hard, they have a talk time, some of the time in online school, where [...] the whole point is just to like, pick which group you want to hang out with and chat with them about whatever you want to talk about. Sometimes it's even like, you have this assignment to do, but you can go into a group and be with friends while you work on it, and get your work done [...] so the teachers have been good about that. But I think that's the piece that's really missing is the, you know, extended ability to chat with each other." - Parent 26

Not Getting Daily Peer Interaction.

Although being barred from seeing friends played a major role in children's dissatisfaction with online school, many children also realized how much they enjoyed simply being around peers in a school setting and working alongside classmates. 37% of children

discussed their disappointment in lack of daily peer interaction, with parents commenting on this

discovery as well:

> "Um, I felt a lot better when it was in person because I got to actually meet my
> teacher, and meet my classmates, and learn their likes and dislikes. And now, like
> I can, but I can't see them. And so I definitely, like, I like *non* online school a lot
> better." - Child 35

> "She's not getting any social boost from school online. She often keeps her
> camera off, although teachers have told her to turn it on and we tell her to turn on.
> But the teachers don't really enforce it. And she doesn't want to keep it on. And
> even if she did, she wouldn't really be interacting [...] I mean, there's a lot of kids
> in her class she's never actually met before. And so there's, there's not good social
> cohesion with her class, having been all online." - Parent 2

Pros

Although the vast majority of children preferred in-person schooling to online, there were

a handful of children and parents who identified social elements that helped children feel better

about remote school. One social benefit of remote school that children noted was "Escaping

Drama/Social Awkwardness." One factor that lessened feelings of social isolation of online

school was being an introvert ("Introverted Children").

Escaping Drama/Social Awkwardness.

11% of children claimed to benefit from virtual learning in that they were able to escape

the potential awkwardness, drama, or social issues that come with in-person schooling. In early

adolescence, it is common to experience social conflicts as well as stressors about judgements

from peers and friends. Some children reported to prefer schooling from home in that they got to

avoid these potential situations, making them feel more comfortable and confident than if they

were to go to school with peers:

> "So I guess I would feel more anxious if I were going to actual school, because if
> I were an actual school, I'd be like, 'Oh, no, what do they think of me?' And other
> things like that, but like, now, they don't see me and I'm like, 'Yeah, everything's

fine.' Um, and also, I feel more confident about school because I think my grades are better when I'm here because I'm in a place that I know." - Child 19

"She's a bit troubled by [not being in in-person school]. But I think there's a little bit of middle school drama too, like her two close friends kind of had a falling out. So there's a little bit of not taking sides with it." - Parent 24

Introverted Children.

4% of children reported preferring online to in-person school due to being introverted or benefiting from having more alone time. These children and their parents claimed that they have adapted well to the social restrictions of online school, as they naturally preferred alone time and did not necessarily crave daily peer interaction.

"Um, I think it's just a little bit worse because I'm pretty heavily [...] introverted. [...] So, while I do enjoy hanging out with friends, I like doing it not as much, which I do think is a good part of the pandemic." - Child 25

"Sometimes he's like [...] 'I don't miss them.' So I think socially, he's more okay than [my other child] is, and seems to be. He says he's just not like, he just doesn't miss people a lot. It's just his personality, honestly." - Parent 27

Bettering the Situation

One theme emerged within the interviews that helped manage children's social situation in online school: "Knowing Your Class Already."

Knowing the Class Already.

Parents and children both acknowledged that children who already knew their class or grade well adapted better to online school than those who did not know their class. Communicating and forming new relationships proved extremely difficult through Zoom, and breakout rooms and holding informal conversations were often awkward. However, 18% of children found that when they were already familiar with the faces they saw on the screen each day, they felt more comfortable talking with them and, in turn, found virtual class less isolating than those who did not know their classmates well:

"Um, I've been with the same class since third grade [...] mainly, it's just like the same 30 kids that I've been with since third grade. So it is easier rather than going into, like a whole new school and having to make new friends. I think it's easier because I already know these people and their personalities. So it's not as hard to communicate." - Child 20

"So he, he knows all these kids already. So it's not, like, you already have relationships with all of them. So it's not like he's in a whole new class. And it's not like he doesn't know any of these people and has never met them. Like he knows them all. They all have relationships, they chat, they play games after school, online or whatever. So I actually don't think socially and he has really suffered all that much. Like, I think he's adjusted pretty well." - Parent 8

Children With an IEP/504 Plan.

Four of the children in my study had some type of learning disability or disorder and

relied on 504s or IEPs (Individualized Education Plan) to assist them in their learning. The data

gathered from these children was categorized in its own separate sub-theme for the Major Theme

of "Online School," as these children's experiences slightly differed from the children in the

sample who did not utilize these accommodations. These children themselves spoke to the

benefits and challenges they faced with virtual learning. However, their parents were best able to

articulate the specifics of how having an IEP or 504 impacted these children's learning.

Therefore, the majority of quotes depicted in the sub and sub-sub themes will be from parents.

Cons

Two sub-sub themes emerged under the Cons that children with an IEP/504 experienced,

"Accommodations Not Translating Well to Virtual Learning" and "Overwhelming/Difficulties."

Accommodations Not Translating Well to Virtual Learning.

One common issue identified by the parents of these children was their education

accommodations not translating well to virtual school. Many of the accommodations children

had involved in-person classroom social and behavior assistance, as well as one-on-one teacher

assistance. These resources, while helpful to children in an in-person setting, were difficult to

apply when learning through a screen and not being physically in a classroom with peers or the

teacher. Parents commented on the challenges they saw their children face because of this:

> "[...] and even when we switched to online, it wasn't great [...] it's just for him, he
> needs a lot more hand holding. But his IEP, his main accommodations were
> verbal, you know, trying to get him to raise his hand, ask questions, initiate
> conversations with peers, and it was kind of transitioning into more of the social
> stuff that has kind of just gone away, because the person to person interactions are
> so different now. The IEP, he has a special teacher that he meets with twice a
> week virtually. And she helps him, you know, organize his writing assignment, or,
> you know, works on some communication skills, or [...] interpreting what he's
> read or, but it's just not the same. And so he still has the IEP, but it was just sort of
> like, the stuff that he needs to work on can't really be worked on very well in the
> online format. Because person to person communication is very different when it's
> in person versus online. And so we had an IEP meeting last week [...] And we
> revisited it and it was good to have that open conversation with everybody. But
> it's still, I don't feel like it's really gonna be an actually active IEP until we're back
> in the classroom because the stuff he needs to work on, he can only work on here,
> you know?" - Parent 21

> "It's hard for them to actually give those accommodations in this form in this way.
> So like he did, he has extended time and preferential seating and [...] things that
> really help with ADHD [...] repeating directions and all that. So we had a meeting
> with the teachers because it was time for conferences [...] And we did review like
> the 'how do you repeat directions for them [online],' and [the teacher said she]
> repeats it to the whole class, but the problem is, I guess he's just not even
> listening. Like anytime it's whole group- it's like, you can't give that one-on-one,
> and he's like, 'I wish we could like do one-on-one more often.'" - Parent 7

Overwhelming/Difficulties.

50% of these children and their parents claimed that online school was much more

difficult and overwhelming than in-person school. To these children, being physically separated

from the classroom, assignments, and teacher made learning confusing and frustrating:

> "It gets glitchy, and the Internet can do anything. And the meetings sometimes are
> bad. And it kind of hurts my head. But then at school, you're more engaged in
> learning, then when you're in virtual [...] it's difficult to concentrate, because the
> teacher is talking a lot of the time and we're not doing as much work. So she gives
> us, like, this amount of time to work, and she talks and I get like, all around my
> room when I don't listen to what she says. And then when we go do the
> assignment, I'm just like, 'What do we do?' And then I get behind and have do it
> later on, and I'm like, 'No, I don't want to do it.'" - Child 7

"I think it's just having the ADHD and being on the screen all day, is super, super hard on his brain. And he's just, you know, hating it [...] he's not finishing everything. So he was getting behind in like, Language Arts, because he wasn't getting things done like the other kids, because he's, you know, he just takes a little longer processing and all that." - Parent 7

This form of learning also posed communication issues, which, for children who already

may have difficulties with communication, only exacerbated the issue:

"Communication is definitely harder [...] and that extra layer of difficulty that, you know, everybody has trouble communicating on zoom. Everybody has trouble in online meetings, but you sort of make it work. But when you're struggling with communication anyway, and then you switch to completely online, it's just, you're like [...] doing everything blindfolded practically, It's been hard for him." - Parent 21

Pros

There was one pro that some children with a learning disability and/or disorder within

this sample experienced, "Freedom in Learning Environment."

Freedom in Learning Environment.

50% of these children found virtual learning more beneficial, particularly because of the

freedom they had over their learning environment. Rather than abide by strict classroom rules

and expectations, learning from home allowed these children to modify their learning in ways

that a regular classroom setting would most likely not deem appropriate:

"So [...] that's good, but I think he's probably had more, like, disciplinary issues, or behavioral issues in the actual physical classroom, where he has to follow those rules. Here, he can be like playing with a little toy on the side. No one's gonna know. And I think that there's a little part of him that likes doing that." - Parent 12

"So his teacher had mentioned that he is doing a good job of, you know, self regulating, by getting up and kind of walking around when he feels the need to. And I think that's a good example of something that, you know, in class, about what had been a little strange, you know, if you were to get up and walk around [...] if he felt the need to be moving or fidgeting, and, you know, now, he can do that [...] because he's got his own space." - Parent 13

The virtual learning environment also allowed for less distraction from peers than an

in-person classroom would provide, helping with class engagement and participation:

> "But, you know, calling out or speaking, you know, he gets really excited when he
> knows the answer. He wants to talk and he's, you know, school is interesting for
> him. And he, so, he's been pretty engaged. But I think that the virtual dramatics is
> much easier for him. Because, you know, one person is talking at a time, it's very
> clear, you know, there's not someone sitting next to him that, you know, that he's
> interested in what they're doing, so it's easier for him to kind of focus straight
> ahead on the screen. So that's been an interesting, you know, interesting thing to
> notice." - Parent 13

Gratitude For In-Person School.

71% of children expressed their gratitude for in-person school. While some children

reported having better virtual schooling experiences than others, or having variables to assist

them in their learning, they still claimed that virtual school has taught them to appreciate the

in-person school experience for all that it is: being with friends and peers, communicating face to

face with teachers, and learning more engaging, hands on material.

> "I definitely feel like I took going to in-person school for granted almost because
> like, in-person school seems so much more fun now than it did when well, than
> now being online. Like being immersed in school, I almost felt like I was looking
> forward to something like I would get out of bed to like, go see my friends or like
> go to recess [...] Or like used to go and like, I don't know, just like, go somewhere
> or even like leave my house because like, now to online school, I don't really
> leave my house that much compared to in-person school." - Child 14

> "I can't believe I hear her saying, 'I would do anything to put my backpack on. I
> would do anything to go to school.' It's just so funny [...] she misses the hallways
> and the lunchtime [...] the other day, she put a backpack on for somebody, and she
> was like, 'Oh, my God, this is the best feeling.' And for her, you know, for kids to
> say that, like they really miss school." - Parent 4

Routine.

Routine was a prominent topic discussed throughout the interviews. Most parents and

even many children acknowledged the importance of instilling a routine during a time when

structure was minimal. Contrary to prediction, many children in this sample reported that their

current routine during the pandemic was fulfilling. While children's routine during fall of 2020 and winter of 2021 differed from previous years, children and parents alike acknowledged how sometimes having a less structured routine and having a break from a typical year's busy schedule was mostly perceived as a blessing for children. Furthermore, parents within this sample were also able to provide children with other activities, resources, and semi-structured routines that contributed to their enjoyment of a less structured school year. Therefore, the two sub-themes that emerged under Routine were "Having Less Structure and Obligations," and "Staying Occupied/Instilling Some Type of Routine."

Having Less Structure and Obligations.

Since isolation orders began, many indoor locations such as school buildings, theater and dance centers, and indoor sports centers have been closed. These closures meant that children had fewer places to go, fewer activities to keep them occupied, and less of a routine to follow. With all of this down time, however, grew many opportunities and moments of freedom for children and their families to enjoy. Below are two sub-sub themes that emerged that convey the benefits of slowing down and instilling a relaxed routine.

Appreciation of Slowing Down and Relaxing

45% of children said that they appreciated how relaxed their schedules became. Without rushing around to school, practices, games, and other daily activities, children and their parents both discovered the benefits of having fewer obligations in their schedules:

> "I don't really have a reason why and how I like it better. But, like, the good part is that we get to stay home instead of going out every day and being in a rush. We just get to stay home." - Child 29

When asked about not doing theater this year, Child 19 stated why it was actually more of a relief than a disappointment:

"Honestly, I'm kind of a little relieved, because like, it was nice, but it wasn't my favorite thing to do. But I kind of did it because I would feel guilty if I left. Because like, I don't, I don't want them to see me and be like, 'hey, she left.' So yeah." - Child 19

"I think she might enjoy that we don't have to drive around as much as we used to. So instead of like, driving to piano lessons, she now just can stay home and do it on the computer. I think that aspect of not having to rush around to places is nice for her." - Parent 24

When asked how she thinks her children felt about their schedule change in playing

outside with friends every day as opposed to their typical afternoon schedule of activities, parent

27 said:

"I think they love it. Yeah, I do. I think that they really enjoy not having that like, schedule of life [...] I'm like teaching them to slow down and kind of have more freedom to do what they want."

Some children and parents also commented on the benefits of having a more

relaxing morning schedule than during a regular year when children attended in-person

school:

"Well, I really like sleeping in and I just like, go downstairs and my mom makes a chocolate croissant for me. And then I just eat it and come back upstairs. And then I'm a few minutes early for my class, but then I just get online. But at the end of the day, if we were in-person, um, usually, I would do athletics, and that was for like an hour. And I didn't really like it [...] But now [...] after my last class, I'm just in my room. I don't have to like go anywhere [...] I like it better to stay here and not have to do athletics and [I like] waking up later." - Child 24

"[...] that's the one thing they love, they get to wake up later. And so yeah, it's definitely made mornings a lot more relaxed. So they basically, usually get up well before they need to. And so they're basically, they don't need to be up until eight o'clock versus the [routine of] getting dressed and ready for breakfast." - Parent 15

Discovering New Hobbies

53% of children said that they were able to discover new hobbies and talents of theirs

during all this new allotted downtime in their schedules:

"I sort of use COVID as a creative outlet. I write a script for my next project, or I start working on another song or another beat or something. [...] I feel like [...] without COVID, I sort of wouldn't get as much done in those areas, as you know, I would have without COVID. It's really helped me in that way." - Child 6

"Also, I like doing art and having time to do art [...] I mean, I've done art like, before the pandemic, but I wouldn't like, focus on it as much because I wouldn't have time to like, do it. I would normally do art in the middle of the day, like in school we have a break in the middle of the day." - Child 33

Parents were also primary observers of their children's newfound interests, with many

reporting the benefits that discovering hobbies and talents had on their children:

"I had no idea that [Child 33] was that gifted at art. And she started painting and it was just like, she became this prodigy. And then [Child 34] is like a super gifted florist. Like, she would go to my neighbor's garden and pick flowers and put together these flower arrangements. And I'm like, that is unbelievable. And it's just things like that you would never have the time or the thought process to even think about doing. But when things started shutting down, you had to be extremely creative with your time. And so, you know, the art was just a great outlet for them to express themselves [...] it just, it made them feel good that they were, you know, discovering their God given talents, which normally you're just so busy, you don't even have time to think about." - Parent 29

Staying Occupied/Instilling Some Type of Routine.

Most parents and even many children in the sample commented on how they felt that

establishing some type of routine was beneficial during such an unstructured time in their lives.

Parents in particular discussed the ways in which children were able to maintain some type of

routine, therefore contributing to their children's sense of entertainment, purpose, and meaning in

their everyday lives. The three primary factors that helped children keep a routine were

"Extracurricular Activities," "Spending Time Outside," and "Online School."

<u>*Extracurricular Activities*</u>

In 55% of interviews, participants specifically credited their ability to establish a routine

to extracurricular activities. Many indoor extracurricular activities were cancelled due to

COVID, causing children to rely mostly on outdoor activities, which often came with distancing

and mask restrictions. Still, most children and their parents found that having somewhere

consistent to go during the week outside of the home benefitted their overall structure, and gave

them more joy and purpose in their daily lives:

> "For us baseball was really huge, because we were, you know, it was practically
> normal. He was outside [...] they're playing games. I mean, they were masked, but
> you know, practice, it was really nice to have that normalcy." - Parent 8

> "[Baseball] definitely helps. Because if I didn't have that, I would have nothing to
> do on the weekends. Like completely nothing to do." - Child 7

Spending More Time Outside

45% of parents and children said that they replaced the hours that they would have spent

in school or at an extracurricular with spending unstructured time outside. Kids seemed to

appreciate the extra time they've gotten to play outdoors, and have found it to be an enjoyable

replacement for their typical structured activities they would have been doing in a normal year:

> "But usually, like when I didn't have any sports days, like before coronavirus, I
> just went inside. I never played outside. Like normally I played outside at
> different times. I didn't play outside right after school. Now I do. [...] I do like that
> change. Because before, the only time that I got exercise was when I had sports
> practice or sports games. Now, I'm exercising every day." - Child 30

> "[...] like on a weekend like after this, we're probably gonna walk for like three
> hours. We just like, our neighborhood is [...] super walkable, like, there's lakes.
> And then there's restaurants and beautiful neighborhoods, and we know all of our
> neighbors. So we just literally, I take a backpack, and each girl has their own
> backpack, and we just walk. And we love that. So yeah, they definitely get their
> outdoor time for sure. We're very, very active outside." - Parent 29

Online School

Online school contributed to instilling routine in that it established a daily schedule for

children and kept them occupied during the weekdays. Meanwhile, it also allowed children to

have a slower morning routine, ease into the day more comfortably, and have the freedom of

being in their own homes during school breaks. In this sense, online school held an interesting

balance in children's lives- it gave them a consistent routine while also allowing for flexibility

within that routine. Many parents and children alike commented on the benefits that this unique

structure of online school offered:

> "[...] when I would normally be at, like, school for a longer amount of time, like I
> normally have breakfast with my parents and lunch at school and like, get to a
> house. I try to stay in school for a pretty long amount of time now, but now I get
> breaks and I'm still at home, so I can do more things." - Child 34

> "[Online school] has definitely made mornings a lot more relaxed [...] I mean, it's
> the same routine as it was before, though. Get dressed and have breakfast, feed
> the dog and cat, brush your teeth, brush your hair, and by then it's pretty much
> time for school. School for them starts at nine. And yeah, they've got the routine
> pretty well down. A lot of consistency." - Parent 15

One parent compared the current routine of online school to the start of the pandemic last

March, when children and teachers were sent to online school with no warning. This year's

school routine was found to be more organized, consistent, and fulfilling than last spring's school

routine:

> "I would say March until summer, it was awful. I mean, we'd wake up, they
> would only do school for one hour. It was one hour. That was it [...] but now he,
> he's busy. He wakes up, [...] they're on school from 8:30 until maybe 1:30, and
> then he has schoolwork until maybe 3:00. Then he usually goes and plays, they
> get one hour a day, a video game time. So you might shoot off, and then they're
> outside, you know, riding bikes or getting in trouble [...] they got a solid routine
> now." - Parent 5

Anxiety.

Several children and parents expressed their children having greater amounts of anxiety

during this time. Two themes unfolded of what was likely to be the root of these increasing

anxiety levels within children- anxieties surrounding COVID itself ("Covid Anxiety"), and

anxiety surrounding change in lifestyle due to COVID ("Generalized Anxiety in Relation to the

Current Circumstances").

Covid Anxiety.

11% of children identified increasing amounts of anxiety due to fears of people becoming

sick from the coronavirus. Many of these children's fears stemmed from knowing somebody who

has gotten the illness, or who was exposed to somebody with the illness:

> "Um, I feel like the pandemic has brought lots of stress. I mean, I'm struggling for
> my grandma, because she works in Montgomery County schools. And she is like,
> old but still works in schools. And so I'm worried for her [...] also, one of the boys
> on my football team met with one of his friends, and his friend had the virus. So
> they were wearing masks the whole time [...] So he's still getting a test, because
> he was with us at our practice on Wednesday." - Child 10

> "So that definitely stresses her out [...] like around Halloween, I think was really
> hard. Seeing like posts of kids hanging out in houses [...] I think a lot of that has
> to do with my mom living with us. Right? So I've had I think my, my brother in
> New York has had it, and my sister and her kids have had it in the Midwest. So it's
> definitely a little bit more like in our day to day conversations of being careful
> and trying not to get it." - Parent 14

Generalized Anxiety in Relation to the Current Circumstances.

16% of children described struggling with anxiety during the pandemic not necessarily

being due coronavirus itself, but because of the circumstances that the pandemic brought. This

anxiety was more generalized and - as many kids reported - was hard to identify the specific

sources causing this anxiety. When describing this type of anxiety, however, it became clearer

that, during a time when life was intense and uncertain, and when children had less activities

within their daily lives to occupy themselves, their anxieties in certain areas peaked more than

they would in a typical year:

> "I've always been in my head in the past. And COVID made me feel a bit in my
> head, which wasn't good for my mental health [...] But I think my mental health
> being bad is pretty much just because I'm in the house. And just cuz, you know,
> cooped up with the same people in my room. And [...] I don't know how to say it.
> All I know is that my mental health hasn't been good, no." - Child 6

> "But like, stress wise, I get really stressed. And if it's just like a small thing [...]
> like, a math quiz, I'll be staying up late, like, worrying about it, like not being able
> to sleep. But like, definitely, if things were back to normal, I don't think I'd be this

stressed because like, I could definitely easily go up to someone else, and like, almost talk to them about it." - Child 14

Some parents also commented on the behavior changes they saw in their children related to their anxieties, and the importance of having activities to occupy them:

> "[...] so, especially at the end of last [school] year, and going into the summer, so much crying and being angry at us, you know, being just angry at what had happened, and taking it out on her sister, or on us and [...] once we've started fifth grade two months ago, and now that she's got her Girls on the Run, and she's got her circus, she's in a better mood." - Parent 2

Parental Insight Into Children's Experiences and Long-Term Pandemic Impacts

Parents offered insight to children's thoughts and feelings, as well as understanding and empathy for their children's current situation. The first major theme relays the ways in which parents showed awareness and understanding for their children's feelings during this time, and how they were receptive to these feelings. The other major theme conveys parents' thoughts about how this current time would or would not affect their child/children's development and/or future lives. Each of these major themes comes with various sub-themes, which will all be discussed below.

Parents Being Aware of Their Children's Feelings & Being Receptive to Them.

Many parents discussed having empathy for their children. These parents were receptive to their children's feelings of frustration, boredom, and loneliness. They expressed this understanding and receptiveness throughout their interviews, discussing six topics, coded as the following sub-themes: "Electronic Devices Understanding," "Needing Space," "Craving/Missing Normalcy of Seeing Friends and Having Routine," "Appreciation of Slowing Down and Relaxing," and "Anxiety."

Electronics.

56% of parents discussed how they recognized that loosening their restrictions on

electronic usage would be necessary to support children's PWB, as electronics contributed to

children connecting with their friends and also staying occupied and entertained:

> "In general, I don't have a problem with it. I don't actually think screentime is as bad or as much of an evil as some parents do. There's some parents who are like, scared to death of it, and they think their kids should be not on the screen at all. I don't think so, I think kids need that. I think moving forward, you kind of have to have that awareness and experience." - Parent 18

> "Oh, my, I mean, that's my, you know, the teachers will ask us at the beginning of the school year, 'What's your most important thing to this year?' I'm like, 'That my kids remain happy.' That's it [...] I don't want them to like, fall into a deep depression based on the situation we're in. And so you know, if playing video games, or talking to their friends on the phone keeps them happy... Like, within reason, you know, obviously, they have to play outside sometimes and you know, do other things. But yeah, we've been real liberal with it, particularly this year." - Parent 26

Needing Space.

22% of parents specifically brought up being understanding of their children needing

more space. They recognized that children may not have been the most willing to be around

family or participate in all family activities, and that their children should feel free to remove

themselves from a situation when they could feel themselves becoming overwhelmed or

annoyed. This was particularly true for parents of more introverted children, or of children who

recharge from being alone:

> "[...] there's clearly certain activities that she prefers to do with us, and certain activities that she prefers to do by herself. And I think because [...] she is an introvert, she needs alone time. And we make sure she has that when she needs it. Whether she's reading or going on the tablet or doing whatever, we make sure she has that time. But I think the family time that we do have together, I think she likes that." - Parent 18

> "[...] when he's done doing family stuff, he just disappears upstairs and gets onto his computer. And that's fine. So I think, I think he's been good with it. But sometimes when he's done, he just feels free to get up and wander off. If he's done

being social, or if we've had our, you know, we have our movie and then he- I feel like it's been a good balance for him." - Parent 21

Craving/Missing Normalcy.

Interviews revealed that 40% of parents were very understanding of children's

disappointment in the major changes they've had to deal with throughout the year. Absence of

in-person school, seeing friends, going out to places, and simply having the routine of normal life

caused children's well-being to fluctuate. Although parents agreed with their children that

children's overall PWB was similar to that of a normal year, they observed disheartening changes

in their children throughout the pandemic such as their longing for friends and of craving

normalcy and routine. Many parents, therefore, recognized that they needed to extend their

compassion to their children this year even more than in typical years:

> "I said to them, it's so funny because I joke with them like, you know, as I'm, I can get grouchy or be a little bit naggy or all those things. And like, as much as I get frustrated with you guys, I just want to recognize that this is not ideal for you either. Like this is a moment in your life where you're starting to gain independence, you're making independent decisions, you're, you don't have your parents hovering over. And here we are all in this house together for like 10 months on end. Like, this can't be great for you. And so they're very [...] you know, we joke about it. And I think they're forgiving to some degree." - Parent 16

> "I think I have more compassion for my kids at times than I did, because I see them during the day at school. And I never got to do that before. And it's hard. It's really hard, what they're being asked to do right now, you know, sit in front of this computer all day, and wiggle in their chairs, and you know, try to have these very one dimensional relationships. You know, [my child] has never even met her teacher in person [...] I feel for them tremendously." - Parent 30

Appreciation of Slowing Down & Relaxing.

The pandemic gave parents the chance to see what their children's lives would be like

without having to rush to extracurricular activities and other obligations that they would have in

a normal year. 28% of parents specifically discussed the benefits that having a more relaxed

schedule, and learning to slow down, has had on their children's PWB. One parent described

how her family took walks every morning before online school began, and the benefits of easing

into the day this way had on her daughter:

> "She usually, okay, you know, her day starts a little bit later. And sometimes she doesn't want to do it, but once she gets out you know, I think just, you know, the fresh air and taking it in... she always would enjoy her walk down to the bus stop just taking it in- 'Oh, look at what the trees are doing. Oh, I love the sky.' You know, she's very aesthetic and art driven in that fashion. So being able to do a little of that. You know, it's, it's been good. And even now, during the break, like she'll go out and take a walk with her dad, in the middle of the afternoon, to go get some air [...] So that's good." - Parent 20

Having less busy schedules and more down time at home also helped facilitate greater

family bonding. Many parents found that their children appreciated the extra amount of relaxing

family time they've gotten this past year:

> "I think they like [schooling from home]. That's what they say. Because when we had the opportunity to go back to school, I asked them to write, like, a paper and give me three reasons [...] to support why you do or do not want to go back to school. Both picked that they don't, and one of the reasons was they're enjoying this family time. So, and that was in July or August when they wrote that. So hopefully they still feel that way. That isn't evidence. I don't know what is." - Parent 27

Some parents also made comparisons of their children's current lives to their own

childhoods growing up, stating that their more easygoing schedules may be almost as enjoyable

for their children as it was for them:

> "But he's, it's, we've kind of reverted to, like, the 1950s. So like, he finishes up at school, gets on his bike, goes across to Sheppard park with all his friends and they play football [...] They'd be home before dark and he doesn't have a cell phone. And so he comes home before dark. And I love that. So, yeah, so anyway, I think he probably prefers going back to, you know, me racing him all over the place, but, but he's happy. He's certainly happy seeing all of his friends after school." - Parent 25

> "[...] there's definitely, like, the silver linings, like, he now started playing, like they do little social distance bike riding in the alley behind our house. So he started to do more with neighbor kids, which he didn't do before. Or if you did it, it was very organized [...] now it's a lot more like when I was a kid, and like, a lot more impromptu. So I have to say, I mean, he's a pretty easy going kid anyway.

But he, um, I would not say that he misses it one bit, because it's been replaced with something that in some ways is better." - Parent 12

The themes of "Appreciation of Slowing Down and Relaxing," "Greater Family Bonding" and "Staying Connected" with friends greatly overlapped when coding. As "Appreciation of Slowing Down and Relaxing" appeared to be a prominent theme in children's lives during the pandemic, this theme naturally wove into and overlapped with others. In the example directly above, "Appreciation of Slowing Down and Relaxing" also overlapped a bit with "Staying Connected" as children in this year more than others were able to get together with friends informally after school and just hang out. Furthermore, "Appreciation of Slowing Down and Relaxing" overlapped with "Greater Family Bonding" as children and parents naturally had more time in their schedules to be around each other, facilitating their bonding. Overall, however, "Appreciation of Slowing Down and Relaxing" was most related to discussions about routine, and the general benefits of having a more relaxed schedule and more freedom in one's day. Implications of having a more relaxed routine will be discussed in-depth in the Discussion. For now, though, it is important to note that while children were able to slow down and relax in this year more than in others, children naturally had more time for many things that they wouldn't typically have in a normal year. While two of these factors are seeing friends (coded as "Staying Connected") and being with family (coded as "Greater Family Bonding"), these themes had their own more specific implications upon children during this time than "Appreciation of Slowing Down and Relaxing" did, and thus each emerged as their own themes.

Anxiety.

Interviews revealed that 34% of parents were particularly insightful regarding anxieties and behavior changes their children have been experiencing. While children were unable to pinpoint the root of any of their anxieties, parents were more able to specify why they felt their

children felt more anxious during the pandemic than in years prior. Many parents came to a

consensus that their children had greater anxieties during the coronavirus pandemic not because

of COVID directly, but just to the circumstances that COVID had created. Parents theorized that

because kids were doing less, their anxieties became fewer in terms of quantity, but the anxiety

in certain specific areas became even greater, such as social anxieties or testing anxiety. Another

finding was that children who parents described as tending to be more anxious in general did not

necessarily have greater anxieties during this past year than those who tended to be less anxious:

> "I mean, I think it really messed with his, um, his mental health. You know, when
> he talked a lot about being scared, he talked about, you know, feeling worthless.
> He definitely was angry a lot more. I mean, and things have definitely gotten
> better, but I do think he's more anxious than usual. And like with the schoolwork,
> he gets very anxious about the schoolwork he has to do. And being stressed about
> it." - Parent 17

> "And it's like, he can verbalize that he's feeling anxious [...] Like, [my child] will
> tell me like, 'I'm worried' or, um, I will say though, there were a few nights where
> like, you know, they break down and cry at night and they don't know why they're
> crying. But like, they're, it's just, it's everything. The weight of it all." - Parent 5

How Parents Think that the Pandemic Will Affect Children's Development and/or

Future.

Parents also discussed the implications that living through the pandemic and widespread

isolation will potentially have on their children's development and their future lives. The three

common themes parents identified were "Social Regression," "Instilling Gratitude," and the

overarching theme of this study, "Resilience and Adaptation."

Social Regression.

Within interviews, 31% of parents predicted that the social isolation and the inauthentic

forms of communication their children endured over these months could impact their social

behaviors and development in the years to come:

"I think we'd be remiss to say, like, there hasn't been [...] a regression in that way [...] not having the everyday going to school, learning how to work in a group, because working in a group on a breakout room on zoom is [..] I don't think that that yields the same result as being in a classroom, you know, dealing with 20 other kids in your classroom and going on the playground. And in the lunchroom, there's all these opportunities that they had before that they just don't have now to engage with other kids, and to talk about their weekend and learn how to be a friend and what that looks like. And all those things are being set aside right now, and at 9 and 10 years olds? Like, that's so critical." - Parent 30

"There's no casual socialization in her classes, as far as I have seen. There's nothing outside of the classes, so I can't help but imagine that it's gonna impact her ability to, you know, continue to develop relationships and friendships. And I'm not sure. I mean, because everyone in her age is going through this as well. So maybe they will all have to relearn a lot of social cues and social interactions and protocols." - Parent 15

Instilling Gratitude.

28% of parents reported that experiencing this disruption in normal life has already (and will hopefully continue to) make their children more appreciative of what they have. Parents and children alike both dealt with loss, hardships, and loneliness due to the pandemic, and had to adjust to major life changes. Parents noticed that their children already started to become more appreciative for what they had previously taken for granted, and predicted that children will continue to express gratitude more often than before:

"I also think that there might be some benefits coming out of it, where it's like a time to slow down, it's a time to evaluate your friendships, it's a time to appreciate when you get to spend time with a friend. And I think that has come out of it. I think in the future, like when school starts back up, maybe knowing that it's okay to like, have downtime at home, like you don't always have to be so go, go, go [...] That's my hope." - Parent 1

Some parents also felt that the illness aspect of the pandemic taught their children to be more grateful for their and their family's health, and to develop empathy and think about how their actions can impact other people:

"And she gets that, like, 'if I get this, and I give it to my grandmother, there could be a serious impact.' And, you know, not all kids really get that, they can't, they

don't have empathy, or they can't see outside of themselves. And I think this situation also adds to that, where, you know, this isn't just about you. You might be fine. But your actions can have a big impact on somebody else, someone that you love." - Parent 1

Resilience and Adaptation.

Parents themselves recognized how resilient their children were during this time. While they acknowledged that children experienced many losses and periods of stress and disappointment during the pandemic, parents also recognized that their children had resources and factors that protected them. They also hoped that experiencing the sudden changes that the pandemic caused will teach their children to adapt and persevere through hardship:

> "I think that children are resilient. And we give them we don't give them enough credit [...] If anything, you know, we got this time [together], which we're never going to get back, [...] they found friends in the neighborhood that they didn't really know that they had... they've done the best with the situation. So I think if anything, it just shows them how resilient they are. And I hope they remember that long term." - Parent 27

> "I think if anything, it shows you like, you have to be resilient like that. We can do things in different ways that you don't expect, like nobody likes change, right? We all know that, we don't like change. And that was like, clear, day one of lockdown. But like, I think that he, he's figured out that like, we can change the way we do things and still make things work [...] they've done a lot more outdoors things. We spent a whole lot more time outdoors. And I mean [...] we can't go places like we used to. But I don't know. I think there's, you'll get some good things out of this [...] he's also very, he seems adaptable." - Parent 5

It is important to discuss why "Resilience and Adaptation" is in the table on parental insight while also being the overarching theme of the current study. Within child interviews (as opposed to parent interviews) resilience and adaptation was an implied finding, as most children did not explicitly state these terms. While some children were able to articulate aspects of their adaptability during the pandemic, many children simply commented on their current situation as being "good" or that they still felt "happy" even though they faced challenges. Similar to the other sub-themes within "Parental Insight Into Children's Experiences and Long-Term Pandemic

Impacts," parent testimony on children's adaptability and resilience offered a deeper layer of insight and observation into children's experiences. In sum, while this study was able to infer children's adaptability and resilience through interviews with the children, parents were able to verbally confirm these findings and offer an in-depth perspective on this subject.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to uncover the different ways that children and parents perceived the effects on children of widespread isolation and disruption in their lives due to the coronavirus pandemic. While existing research has explored the ways in which isolation and loneliness can impact children (e.g., Kim, Lee, and Riesche, 2020; Vanhalst et. al, 2012), research is only now appearing about how children might be impacted when experiencing widespread isolation at the same time (e.e. Xie et al., 2020). The unique circumstances brought on by the coronavirus pandemic affected adults and children alike (e.g., Kazlauskas & Quero, 2020). It was of interest to gain the perspective of children in their later childhood years, as these children were at a critical period of socialization within their lives (e.g., Erikson, 1950; Nangle and Erdly, 2001). Further, parent perspectives were gathered in hopes of attaining greater insight into children's psychological well-being (PWB) than if children were only interviewed themselves (Galinsky, 2000).

The present research uncovered many factors that played substantial roles in children's lives during the coronavirus pandemic. 100% of the children within the current study indicated that they were not detrimentally impacted by widespread isolation nor the disruption caused by the pandemic. Because the children within this sample were resilient and adapted to the circumstances they were presented with, the overarching theme that was identified in the current study was "Resilience and Adaptability." Meanwhile, children and their parents discussed a

myriad of factors that played meaningful roles in their lives during the year. As predicted, gathering both the parent and child perspective lended deeper insight into children's experiences, thoughts, and feelings during the pandemic than if only the child perspective had been gathered.

My original intention when beginning the current research was to interview a diverse sample of children from a variety of backgrounds. The only parameters for the study were that the children interviewed must not have been currently diagnosed with depression or anxiety, and that the children must have been in online school from the start of the fall 2020 semester up until the time of their individual interviews. As time went on, however, many school districts transitioned into either in-person school or hybrid (half in-person and half online) school (Bowie, 2021). As a result, as interviews took place, fewer people qualified for the study. Because of this obstacle, the current study's sample came from a handful of well-resourced areas, and the children who participated had many protective factors that helped them manage the challenges created by the pandemic. The non-representative nature of the current sample will be discussed in detail in both the "Limitations" and "Future Research" sections. It has been well-established that children in their later childhood years who have greater amounts of protective factors will likely have greater PWB as they face hardship than those who have fewer protective factors (e.g., Banyard, Hamby, and Grych, 2017). Although the current sample was unintentionally homogeneous, many of the findings from the present study match existing literature indicating that children with a large quantity of protective factors tend to be resilient when faced with adversity (e.g., Constantine, Benard, and Diaz, 1999; Banyard, Hamby, and Grych, 2017) .

In a study on protective factors in adolescence, Constantine, Benard, and Diaz (1999) wrote that the three key factors to building resilience in adolescence are adolescents having caring relationships with others, being held to high expectations, and having meaningful

participation within the settings that are important to them such as their schools or peer networks. The vast majority of children within the current study had all three of these key factors present within their lives, at least to some extent. When one of these three key factors faltered within a child's life, the child usually indicated that they had the resources to adjust. For example, if a child was not able to participate in a sport that was important to them (meaningful participation), they often found another meaningful activity that was available to them, such as committing their time to a new hobby. The protective factors that helped children adjust and become resilient during the time of widespread isolation will be discussed below. They will generally be presented in a similar order in which they were addressed within my study's Introduction.

Widespread Social Isolation During the Pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic caused children to be socially isolated from their friends and peers in numerous settings (Kazlauskas & Quero, 2020). As indicated by the current study's participants, the primary settings in which children experienced isolation fell into two categories: outside of school settings and within school settings. Protective factors will be discussed throughout.

Perceived Effects of Social Isolation in Outside of School Settings

As predicted, isolation from peers appeared to play a prominent role in children's PWB; however, children and parents often flipped the discussion from how children were isolated to instead convey the ways in which children were able to stay connected with one another. Concern with a lack of in-person socialization with friends and peers makes sense given the importance that peer relationships and socialization have on children's PWB and development during late childhood (e.g., Elkind, 1970; La Greca and Harrison, 2005). That said, rather than focus on the ways in which children were barred from seeing their friends, parents and children

often described the ways in which children were able to make a "bad situation less bad" (Parent

20) and were able to socialize. Regarding in-person interactions, either being in a pod, social

distancing, having an extracurricular activity, or a combination of these factors, seemed to

contribute to children's positive levels of PWB. The vast majority of children expressed their

enjoyment in seeing their friends throughout whichever of these means they were able to do so:

> "We social distance, we don't like, do football and tackling and stuff like that [...]
> It's like a group of friends [...] I like it. It's fun." - Child 29

> "I did [paddleboarding] with my friends [...] and then I had multiple friends
> during soccer [...] I was spending a good amount of time with them during these
> activities." - Child 13

Many parents recognized how isolation from friends at such an important age for

socialization could impact their children's PWB and their socioemotional health. Parents'

concerns for their children's mental health often caused them to loosen their isolation restrictions

and allow their children to see some of their friends, sparingly:

> "[...] we had to, you know, think about his mental health because we've been
> really concerned about him. And so, you know, his family's being safe, and we're
> being safe. And yes, I mean, I think it's been huge to have [this child] and his little
> brother. He plays with both of them quite a bit. So, so yeah, that's been great." -
> Parent 7

Furthermore, children relayed that one reason they adapted to these new methods of

seeing their friends was their awareness of the situation being temporary:

> "I do like how we're playing outside and socializing outside [...] And I could do it
> for a few more years, but it wouldn't be quite as enjoyable. Because sometimes
> with my friends, we'd have like a playdate for half the day, outside, and then we'd
> like, have a sleep over that night or have dinner together. And that wouldn't really
> happen because we'd be inside without masks on probably." - Child 28

Contrary to predictions that widespread isolation would be severe and come with tight

restrictions, children were frequently able to get creative in the ways they saw their friends, and

some parents were lenient in letting their children socialize in ways more similar to a typical

year. In addition, the vast majority of children understood that their unorthodox means of

socializing would not last forever, and they were willing to do their part to prevent the

coronavirus spread as long as their situation remained temporary. Matching observations from

various Op-Ed pieces commenting on family adjustments during the coronavirus, it was common

for families to find ways for children to supplement interactions through social distancing and

trusted groups of friends such as pods (Gruber, 2020; Moyer, 2020). Because parents were able

to find ways for their children to adapt to the circumstances of the pandemic and see their

friends, most children in the current study did not appear to suffer socioemotionally to the extent

that was initially predicted.

   Still, children admitted to wishing they could see their friends as much as they would in a

normal year. As reported in the results, regarding social distancing in particular, children valued

any means of seeing their friends. Still, the limited forms of connecting with peers was

considered "Not Ideal" by many of the children and parents alike, resulting in the emergence of a

sub-theme. This finding may support prior research stated within the current study's Introduction

on the importance of peer connectedness (Villarruel & Luster, 2006) while perhaps offering a

new insight as well. Although being able to see friends can contribute to children's sense of

connectedness to friends to an extent, restricted types of hangouts may not be optimal for

fostering genuine friendships or child PWB. Rather, children may need consistent close contact

in various settings with their friends in order to foster their most dynamic, authentic, and ideal

friendships.

   In sum, the vast majority of children expressed the benefits of seeing their friends in

some way, whether through being in a pod, social distancing, or seeing them at extracurricular

activities. Some children commented on social distancing in particular not being a permanent or

ideal solution to seeing friends; yet, children being able to see their friends in-person outside of

school seemed to be a strong contributor in allowing children to adapt to their situation and prove

resilient throughout the pandmeic. Along with the other protective factors that children had

within their lives as well (to be discussed) maintaining in-person connections in outside of school

settings appeared to greatly support their PWB during the time of widespread isolation.

Perceived Effects of Social Isolation Within Online School Settings

　　　While children were able to adapt and find ways to experience in-person peer interaction

in settings outside of school, children were unable to experience these connections within their

online school settings. Although many classes were held synchronously, and children were able

to have real-time face-to-face interactions via Zoom, all classes were virtual, meaning that in no

way did children experience physical, in-person peer interactions. Participants in the sample

attended virtual (or remote) school since the start of the pandemic in America in March 2020

(Kazlauskas & Quero, 2020). Due to an overwhelming amount of negative feedback from

participants on the social isolation endured through remote learning, managing the social

isolation of online school may well have been where children faced their greatest PWB

challenges. These findings would make sense given that, during times of social isolation, a

prominent protective factor that contributes to positive PWB is school connectedness

(Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, and Neumark-Sztainer, 2007). School connectedness

involves feeling a connection to one's school environment and staff, and looking forward to

going to school each day (Eccles, Early, Fraser, Belansky, and McCarthy, 1997). The major

complaints and areas of dissatisfaction with school for children within the current study were

identified as the themes "Losing Friends/Not Making Friends," "Not Seeing Close Friends

Everyday," and "Not Getting Daily Peer Interaction." Due to the social isolation children felt in

remote school, many children reported having a diminished sense of connection to their friends, their peers, and their teachers. These findings appear to confirm the previous research in that children who do not feel connected to their school or their classmates may feel less protected in times of social isolation than children who experience a sense of school connectedness (Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, and Neumark-Sztainer, 2007). Child 26 said that the worst part of the pandemic for him was "the fact that I'm [...] losing a lot of friends" due to not seeing them in person every day as he would in a normal school year. Meanwhile, one parent expressed this loss of school connectedness that he witnessed within his child:

> "Um, she's definitely experienced a lot of loss, a lot of distancing. She doesn't feel connected to a class this year in ways that she has in the past. And I don't know if this counted, but she was in an after school program. And so she had a lot of friends there. Now that she doesn't have that activity, that interaction, she definitely misses it." - Parent 15

Some children also reported feeling frustrated and that it was hard for them not being able to see their friends in an in-person school setting on a daily basis. These findings align well with opinion pieces published during the pandemic on children who reported feeling "sad and angry" because they missed their school friends and wished that they could "see [their] teachers in person" (Natanson & Meckler, 2020). Based on child and parent testimony, it is plausible that the burden of being cooped up inside one's home as opposed to being in a communal classroom or on a sociable playground caused feelings of frustration, loneliness and longing for peer interaction within many children in the current study.

The importance of school connectedness during times of social isolation may also be why children who knew their classmates from previous years enjoyed attending online school more than children who did not know their classmates already. The former children reported already having an established sense of school connectedness. Although they felt that their online school

experience was not ideal, many of the children who knew their classmates already acknowledged

how their situations were better than children who were not able to connect with their peers

before the school year began, as did their parents:

> "She is somewhat fortunate [...] she happens to be in a class that has been a group
> of students [...] that have mostly been together for four years or so. So when she
> goes on to her school time, most of her good friends are in that class as well. And
> as they go into breakout groups, she's having some opportunities with those
> friends. And, and that's aiding in her friendship connection. Because you already
> know what they're doing, or you already know what the work is, you're talking
> about some of the school stuff somewhere along the way, which I think is helping
> with the less amount of face to face time that she's actually able to have. [...] She's
> not completely losing the connection with all of those friends." - Parent 20

> "Now, I get a lot of more group activities to do, which I really like [...] I've been
> with the same class since third grade [...] So it is easier rather than going into,
> like, a whole new school and having to make new friends. I think it's easier
> because I already know these people and their personalities. So it's not as hard to
> communicate." - Child 20

The current study's results may speak to the importance of school connectedness as a

protective factor for children experiencing social isolation. Children who discussed feeling less

connected to their classmates than other participants expressed significant PWB challenges

when it came to online school. Meanwhile, children who discussed having an established sense

of connection with their classmates, such as Child 20 above, did not report having particularly

noteworthy PWB challenges in their remote schooling experiences. Having a sense of school

connectedness, therefore, may have allowed these children to enjoy school to a greater extent

than those who felt less socially connected. It is likely that these children who knew their

classmates already may have benefitted the most from the protective factor of school

connectedness in helping them adapt, be resilient, and maintain adequate PWB throughout the

pandemic.

In sum, social isolation of online school seemed to be a considerable loss that many

children within the current study's sample reported experiencing during the pandemic. Some

children experienced this isolation to a lesser extent than others depending on how connected

they felt to their classmates during virtual schooling. To these children, the protective factor of

school connectedness may have played a significant role in shaping their pandemic experiences

and contributing to their ability to adapt. That said, the children who did not appear to

experience a high sense of school connectedness still reported positive PWB, and were overall

able to adapt and emerge resilient from the pandemic. One may attribute these findings to the

factors in children's lives aside from online school that can supplement children's senses of

connectedness and meaning. These other factors will be discussed throughout this Discussion.

Still, it is important to emphasize the psychological toll that the isolation of remote school can

have on children, as school is a significant part of children's daily lives. It would be useful to

conduct future quantitative research that examines the correlation between attending school

online and child PWB.

Achievement in Online School.

Another protective factor found to support children's PWB during times of social

isolation is academic achievement (Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, and Neumark-Sztainer,

Dianne, 2007). Academic achievement refers to children's ability to thrive and succeed in an

academic environment. When children make achievements within a school environment, they

gain confidence in their ability to adapt and meet expectations set upon them. In Masten,

Hubbard, Gest, Tellegen, Garmezy, & Ramirez's (1999) study, they also found that resilience

among adolescents is associated with engagement in their education and working toward

educational milestones. Within the present research, many children reported struggling

academically in two realms, as captured by the themes "Technology and Communication

Difficulties" and "Not [Being] as Engaging or Meaningful as In-Person School." The children in

the current sample reported similar academic distressors to these other child testimonies that

were captured during the pandemic, with a common theme being children feeling a sense of loss

and absence of connection between themselves and their schools. Asking questions through chat

or through a Zoom screen, making sense of emails, and learning only through visual and auditory

methods as opposed to engaging in hands-on learning was described as extremely frustrating by

numerous children during the pandemic. Natanson and Meckler (2020) wrote that one child

sometimes "closes his eyes [during Zoom class] and imagines" being able to communicate and

work with his teacher and peers in person. Children in the current sample reported similar

feelings:

> "[...] you don't get as much energy, you're staring in front of the computer all day.
> [...] Your eyes get duller and duller until you fall asleep on your desk." - Child 35

> "I'm very much of like, a kinesthetic learner. I like feeling stuff, and being able to,
> like, have everything physically there. And so I hate online learning in that sense,
> because it's so frustrating. Because if there's something I don't understand, the
> only thing I can do is go to my teachers and ask them about it. And the only thing
> they can do is repeat it. There's nothing really more that they can do besides, like,
> tell me [...] And so I just, in general, feel less motivated to do stuff because [...] I
> feel like I'm never going to understand it. And so I'm like, what's the point of
> trying if I never understand it, you know?" - Child 16

> "It's harder, it's hard to communicate. And it's hard to sort of get an idea of what
> exactly you need to do. And it's hard to get things done as a whole. [...] it's time
> consuming, and there's nothing wrong with that, it's school. But you know, it's a
> lot more... it's a lot harder, it's just more difficult." - Child 6

These barriers that children described seemed to prevent them from experiencing

fulfilling and meaningful learning experiences. Children who made these reports may therefore

have felt a lack of academic achievement within their school lives. It is possible that having a

diminished sense of academic achievement may have been a risk factor to these children during

the time of widespread isolation. That said, future quantitative research should be done to

determine if there was a true correlation between children having a lowered sense of academic

achievement and experiencing negative PWB during the pandemic.

There were a couple factors, however, that contributed to some children's sense of

academic achievement and to feeling less negatively impacted by online schooling than other

children within the current study. One of these factors children reported was being able to focus

more within their at-home learning environment:

> "There's also benefits to online school, because I can be at home and be able to do
> things during my lunch break [...] and if we're doing a project, there's more things
> to do [...] Because it's easier to find things online [...] And it makes it kind of
> more fun to be able to explore more like, other topics than just what we're looking
> at on that moment." - Child 8

> "I just feel like I'm doing better on online than I was with normal [school],
> because also on online I can, I know how to like retake stuff a lot. Well, in normal
> school, I wouldn't retake stuff that much. So now that I can retake online, it's a lot
> better." - Child 27

In a typical classroom setting, children have to follow strict classroom rules and behave

in ways that will not distract their peers. One benefit to being in a private setting of their own is

that they could adjust their environments to fit their learning preferences and to have more

flexibility in their school days (Grose, 2020). This freedom may have actually allowed children

to focus more in school and to be more able to explore their true educational interests and

passions (McDonald, 2020). The ability to have more control over their learning may have also

given children a greater sense of control during such a chaotic and unpredictable year. The theme

"Freedom in Learning Environment" will be discussed in-depth later on in this Discussion, with

more specific implications relayed.

Some children and parents also discussed the benefits of having a quality teacher in their virtual classes. Specifically, they acknowledged how having an especially engaging, motivating, or organized teacher made the online schooling experience more meaningful and enjoyable:

> "Overall, she seems to enjoy it, I think she's got a couple of very charismatic teachers [...] I think, you know, especially the math teacher, you know, is quite humorous. And so she seems to be very engaged with the different things that he does, and her English teacher is really outstanding. So, you know, that's quite engaging." - Parent 14

Children with engaging teachers also reported having academic success and feeling as though they were actually learning (contrasting numerous cases of children and parents reporting the dullness and non-engaging aspects of the online school environment). These testimonies describing the effects of "Good Teachers" on children's senses of academic success and classroom engagement may very well be examples of children experiencing the protective factor of "academic achievement." The children in the current sample who had variables that made their learning experiences meaningful seemed to have the greatest enjoyment of online school as they endured widespread social isolation. Perhaps academic achievement played a significant role in children being better able to adapt to their isolating circumstances and emerge resilient, contributing to positive child PWB during the pandemic. Future quantitative research should be done to determine the correlation that may exist between academic achievement and overall child PWB.

It is also important to note that the children in my sample were able to engage in daily education in some type of learning environment, and that they had the resources and support systems around them to gain assistance in their daily education. Parents reported being able to help their children with their work often, and that their children had access to technological resources such as iPads and desktop computers that allowed them to efficiently complete

assignments. These factors most likely contributed to at least a partial sense of daily academic motivation and overall academic achievement for the children within the current sample. Meanwhile, experiencing a sense of academic achievement was likely not the case for children who did not have access to such support systems, to technological resources, or to high-speed internet connection. Auxier and Anderson (2020) uncovered that the educational barrier of access to technological resources affected many children in low-income households, with these gaps being particularly pronounced in Black and Hispanic households. The children within the current sample, therefore, were perceived to be less affected by these barriers than children who faced greater academic challenges. Online school may have been one of the primary variables hindering the PWB of the children in the current study; however, enduring the negative aspects of remote school did not cause these children to experience overall faltering levels of PWB during the pandemic. Remote school was merely one of the challenges these children had to adapt to and overcome during a temporary time period. It is therefore likely that, as the children within the current sample were able to receive some type of daily education, and had the resources and other protective factors to support them, they still emerged resilient from the coronavirus pandemic.

Family Closeness and Connectedness

One of the greatest protective factors children can have during periods of social isolation is family connectedness (Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, and Neumark-Sztainer, 2007). According to Hall-Lande et al. (2007), high levels of family connectedness (i.e. feeling senses of closeness to and caringness from family members) has been found to contribute to the PWB of adolescents during times of social isolation. Based upon the interviews, it seemed that family connectedness greatly contributed to children's PWB in the present research. My results found

that many parents were attuned to their children's needs and their feelings, and that children

benefited from family support and quality family time during the pandemic. Although there were

some caveats such as children having "Too Much Family Time" and family members "Not Being

a Permanent Replacement for Friends," children overall appeared to feel supported, cared for,

and listened to. Family connectedness levels appeared strong, and interviews pointed to parents

offering secure and nurturing environments for their children. These findings are important in

that they confirm that during times of child adversity, especially when adversity centers around

social isolation or other social difficulties, families can be a buffer, or source of support, that help

children build resilience (Gauze, Bukowski, Aquan-Assee, and Sippola, 1996; Hall-Lande,

Eisenberg, Christenson, and Neumark-Sztainer, 2007). Under the result's major theme of

"Family Support," a few themes emerged that considerably impacted children's PWB during the

pandemic: "Autonomy," "Greater Bonding," "Having a Sibling," and "Having a Pet." The two

caveats that will be discussed were "Family Not Being a Permanent Replacement for Friends"

(referred to in the Discussion as Friends Versus Family) and "Too Much Family Time."

Autonomy

A notable sub-theme within the major theme "Family Support" was parents supporting

their children through giving them "Autonomy." The children in the current study's sample were

at an age where they were beginning to rely less on their parents, foster peer relationships, and

take on new experiences independently (Elkind, 1970). Autonomy is also especially important

for children approaching adolescence to learn, as becoming more independent is a crucial

developmental milestone and a trait that will help children grow and become capable adults

(Eccles, Early, Fraser, Belansky, and McCarthy, 1997). Many parents within the current study

were able to recognize this developmental shift within their children, and reported giving their

children the freedom to problem solve and make choices on their own. According to Neubauer,

Schmidt, Kramer, and Schmiedek's (2021) study on autonomy-supportive parenting during the

coronavirus pandemic, lending children autonomy is positively associated with high levels of

child PWB and parental need fulfillment. Parental need fulfillment is an important outcome to

acknowledge along with child PWB as it could potentially lead to positive changes in overall

parent well-being, creating a healthier and happier family environment. The present research

dovetails well with these findings, as children who were given greater autonomy reported not

only having positive PWB, but having extremely strong family connectedness:

> "I try to give them a lot of autonomy. So like, sometimes they'll make meals for
> my husband and I [...] Sometimes I'll let them take walks together. So I'm trying
> to really allow them to feel more competent and make more, you know,
> independent decisions right now, because, honestly, like, it's selfish. It's a selfish
> decision because I just need a little bit of space. But then for them, they feel great
> because they're like, I'm going on a walk and I'll be back in 30 minutes, and I just
> trust them. So, you know, we've done a lot of that. [And] they've each gotten jobs,
> which has helped, you know, give them a lot of confidence. And they like making
> their own money and having something to look forward to." - Parent 29

Parent 29's two children who were interviewed also reported having high PWB, enjoying

all of the extended family time they've experienced during the pandemic while also being trusted

to do independent activities. Specifically, these children discussed how supportive their parents

were of them and their enjoyment of the games and activities they played together as a family.

This strong family connection could be in part due to the autonomy these children had, and the

positive feedback loop of autonomy and parental need fulfilment fostering a healthy family

environment. Children reporting having high quality familial relationships during the pandemic

would make sense, then, given parents' statements and examples in how they lent support to

their children through being receptive to their needs and through giving them autonomy.

Family Connectedness

Another sub-theme that emerged under the theme "Family Support" was "Family

Connectedness," which contained three sub-sub themes describing the ways in which children

felt connected to their families: "Greater Bonding," "Having a Sibling" and "Having a Pet." The

theme "Greater Bonding" was especially prominent, with the vast majority of parents and

children claiming that their families experienced greater bonding during the pandemic than in

other years, and that their families grew closer as a result. As parents and children alike had less

obligations and places to be in comparison to a normal year, the families within the current

sample used their extra free time to play, bond, relax, and try new activities together:

> "Um, I think one of the biggest things is just that my husband and I are physically
> at home a lot more, you know, so, like, if the kids need us or have a question or
> [...] miss us and want to come say hi, like, all they have to do is like, go into the
> room and open the door and like, give us a hug. Or, you know, 'I need help with
> such and such,' like, we can sort of drop what we're doing for a minute and go
> and help them. So I would say like, just the interaction, the physical interaction is
> more, right? Like, our presence is a lot more." - Parent 11

> "We're super lucky there. They're like, you know, as far as we know, and as far as
> everyone has said, they're, they're happy [...] we've like, taken these [...] huge
> hikes and, like, they were, you know, it was cool, they got over 14,000 feet. We
> did all these things together that we never would have had that time for otherwise,
> so we have worked pretty hard to make it... The Silver Linings and that kind of
> stuff in it." - Parent 28

Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, families experienced some "silver

linings" as well. Children and parents alike said they had greater opportunities to try new

activities together, talk and open up to each other, and simply have each other around for help or

for brief moments of support. As stated earlier, one key aspect of the protective factor family

connectedness is feeling close to one's family (Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, and

Neumark-Sztainer, 2007). As children and their parents reported having more opportunities to

talk, play, and bond, during the pandemic as opposed to a normal year, it makes sense that

children would report feeling closer to their families during this time. Children's feelings of

closeness to their families likely supplemented some feelings of disconnection that they may have felt during widespread isolation, especially as family is still a significant and important part of children's lives in their later childhood years. "Greater Bonding" therefore was most likely a prominent factor protecting children's PWB during the pandemic, as children felt close to and cared for by their primary support systems within their lives. "Greater Bonding" will be discussed further in the section on "Routines," as these two subjects greatly overlap and both made positive contributions to family dynamics and overall child PWB. It is also important to note that the children within the current study were fortunate enough to have these strong and supportive family relationships protecting them during the time of social isolation. As there were no families within the sample that reported having specifically poor or unhealthy family relationships, I was unable to comment on or compare the PWB of children who had positive family relationships to those who experienced more negative family dynamics.

Children and parents also reported that having somebody in the house to play with was extremely beneficial during a time when there was less to do and when children were seeing less people. One theme that arose from these discussions was "Having a Sibling." Children and parents reported that having a sibling helped buffer feelings of loneliness and boredom during social isolation, and also that spending more together allowed children to become closer with their siblings:

> "She still has social stimulation just by watching her older siblings. So it's not quite as like, it doesn't take as much of a toll on her as maybe if she were an only child." - Parent 1

> "I feel like since I'm with [my brother] more I like, I've like grown- I've done more stuff with him. And that's kind of made our relationship a lot stronger." - Child 3

These findings relate to previous research as they confirm that having positive sibling relationships can be a crucial protective factor for children in early adolescence (Ang, 2015). Positive sibling relationships can help children feel a greater sense of both connection to family and connection to peers. According to Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, and Neumark-Sztainer (2007), a key aspect of family connectedness is feeling close to one's family members. Because of the high quantities of children and parents reporting that they grew closer with their families during widespread social isolation, it may be safe to assume that family connectedness, specifically "Greater Bonding" with family members and "Having a Sibling" were two prominant contributors to enhancing children's PWB during the pandemic.

Further, not being able to see friends as often as they used to may have perpetuated the perceived effects that siblings had on children's PWB during the pandemic. While children were unable to see their friends as frequently as they would normally, children may have found more relief in spending time with siblings than they would during a typical year of socialization. Importantly, however, the vast majority of children within the current study had at least one sibling close in age to them. It would have been beneficial to interview a greater number of only children to see if there were substantial differences in PWB among these children versus children with siblings.

Yet, an unexpected theme emerged among the children who did not have close sibling bonds. Parents of these children made note of how beneficial "Having a Pet" was to only children, or to children who did not have siblings similar in age to them:

> "[...] the dog is an anchor for her, that, the dog is an emotional anchor for her. She [...] loves her dogs and she's put a lot of energy into him during this pandemic." - Parent 2

These findings are particularly interesting in that maybe pets can have just as great an impact on child PWB and feeling a sense of social connectedness as peers, friends, and siblings can have. According to Casselsa, White, Gee, and Hughes (2017), children 12 years of age reported having more satisfaction from their relationships with their pets than with their siblings, and that having a pet as opposed to a sibling offered a non-judgmental companion. Furthermore, in his study on the effects of having a pet during the pandemic lockdown, Preidt (2020) found that 90% of pet owners felt that their pets helped people cope emotionally and contributed to their overall well-being. Preidt's research supports the current findings that children seemed to find comfort in their pets during the pandemic even more so than in a typical year. Pets' unconditional love, lack of judgement, and loyalty may have helped children cope during a time when they were more lonely and emotionally fragile. This form of constant playmate during the pandemic, then, may have been just as adequate of a companion for children than having a sibling, offering its own unique mental health benefits.

Parents and children also commented on the benefits that having a pet offered to families as a whole, positively contributing to overall family dynamics. Parent 2 confidently claimed that "[I] will find a lot of COVID puppies" within the current study, as many families found that getting a pet during the pandemic was not only an activity for children to have, but a bonding agent that would bring the family closer together:

> "[...] the kids and my husband go to the beach with the dog, [they're] spending a lot more time with the dog and playing with the dog. So yeah, just being [...] like a more like, more physically together as a family and immediate family unit." - Parent 11

> "We actually just got a puppy this weekend. And so like everybody's getting along really well right now, and we're all playing with the puppy." - Parent 26

These factors relating to family connectedness, "Greater Bonding," "Having a Sibling," and "Having a Pet" appeared to greatly benefit children's PWB during widespread social isolation. It was fortunate that all of the children within the current sample had close and strong family connections, at least one sibling, and/or had a pet. These factors allowed children to feel supported, cared for, and loved, and to maintain a sense of connection. One major takeaway from children's high rates of family support and connectedness along with their reports of adequate PWB could be that they confirmed Hall-Lande et al.'s (2007) findings: family connectedness is one of the strongest protective factors for children who are experiencing social isolation. Yet, one limitation of children all reporting strong family connectedness is that I was unable to hear from the experiences of children who did not have this type of support. Comparing PWB of children with family connectedness versus children without this protective factor would lend these findings greater merit than through only hearing from children who experienced strong family connectedness. It will be helpful to conduct future research that interviews children who did not have as naturally strong relationships with their families, who did not have a sibling, or who did not have a pet.

Caveats- Friends Versus Family

One important caveat under "Family Support" was "Family Not Being a Permanent Replacement for Friends." Although families were a supplement for children's temporary loss of peer interaction, a large sum of children and parents felt that it would not be sustainable for children to solely rely on their families for the socioemotional support that peers normally give. According to Nangle and Erdly (2001), peer relationships are especially important to late childhood/early adolescent well-being. Children in their later childhood years naturally want to rely less on familial relationships, and they feel their most confident and capable when they have

close friends and belong to a peer group. It is therefore understandable that the vast majority of

children in the current study stated that they would prefer getting to see their friends more often,

and that their parents and siblings were not a long-term solution if isolation orders were to

continue indefinitely:

> "if, like, things were back to normal, I don't think I'd be this stressed, because I could definitely easily go up to someone else, and like, almost [...] talk to them about it. Um, even though I can do that with my family here, it's almost like, sometimes I like, will talk to like a friend [...] that I'm a really close friend too. So it's like, yeah, sometimes I don't want to talk about [it] with my family, but I want to talk about it with like, a friend." - Child 14

> "[...] friend wise, I think he's, I think he would, he would do well to have someone else other than a sister to play with. They get along great. But, you know, siblings and all that. So yeah, I would say that he feels the change more than he articulates that he's missing." - Parent 21

According to Denworth (2020), children benefit from peer interaction and socialization

with friends for more reasons than just entertainment and developing social skills. Denworth

cited pediatrician Ronald Dahl who claimed that children have a "natural affinity" for both

learning about their peers and friends, and for learning about who they are in relation to others.

Through developing and maintaining friendships, children learn about trust, what draws them to

a person, who likes them, and other deep elements that come along with forming a close

friendship. During the pandemic, many children were not as able to bond with friends, vent to

friends, or nurture a relationship with someone of their choosing as they would in a normal year.

It is therefore likely that many children were less able to develop and grow their friendships as

well. Although they had family members and pets to support them and facilitate some type of

connection, many participants reported that these relationships did not hold the same meaning or

foster the same sense of identity that developing a friendship would. At such a crucial

developmental window for children to be forming friendships, it begs the question of whether

children's friendships will be affected once the pandemic is over. Perhaps taking a year off of

forming and maintaining friendships, or developing close bonds with friends, will cause children

to struggle with their friendships once their lives are back to normal. Maybe some children will

have lost friends, maybe some will struggle making them, or maybe some children will have to

regain a sense of closeness with their friends that they had before the pandemic occurred.

Caveats- Too Much Family Time

The other caveat within the major theme "Family Support" was "Too Much Family

Time." It was only natural for children to become tired of their families after their extended

periods spent indoors with them. Campbell (2020) referred to this commonly reported feeling as

"family burnout," with symptoms being emotional or physical exhaustion, becoming annoyed

easily, and having difficulty handling usual tasks. Despite these feelings of restlessness or

annoyance, however, many children overall reported that they grew closer to their families,

emphasizing this outcome over feelings of family burnout. Children were also often very

self-aware when reporting their frustrations of having too much family time. Many described

their fighting as normal, and that needing space was a natural reaction to being with the same

people for days at a time:

> "Um, so we fight sometimes. But I think it's a pretty good relationship. We will
> play games with each other, or we play outside. Sometimes I get annoyed with
> them, sometimes they get annoyed with me. And then we just go to our separate
> places and sit quietly or play by ourselves for a little bit. But I think we have a
> pretty good, I have a pretty good relationship with them." - Child 28

These findings may imply that this caveat might not necessarily be a permanent setback

for children nor a major PWB challenge, but rather more of a temporary complaint. However,

when discussing this caveat's implications, it is also important to take into account the timeline

of the current research. Interviews were held from November of 2020 through January of 2021,

while the pandemic restrictions lasted through the rest of the school year. Although children and

parents reported being able to manage their experiences with family burnout, these feelings may

have only been true during the short window of time that the current study took place. Recent

articles warned that family burnout is not temporary, and that it is important to take actions to

manage parent and child mental health (Griffith, 2020; Moms and Dads, 2020; Grose, 2020).

These sources relayed that if families do not allow themselves enough outlets from each other, or

if parents set too high of expectations on themselves despite the change in circumstances, family

burnout will reach unhealthy levels and could lead to risky family environments. Children within

the current study's sample had numerous protective factors and/or naturally nurturing and

supportive families, leaving evidence to believe that feelings of "Too Much Family Time" was

only natural and will not have lasting effects. It would have been useful, however, to follow-up

with families months later and see if their feelings of family fatigue grew or affected family

dynamics to a greater extent than the effects that I perceived from earlier on in the pandemic.

The limitation of the current study taking place during a brief three-month time period will be

elaborated upon in the Limitations section.

Technology and Social Media

Technology and social media also seemed to contribute positively to children's PWB in

helping children connect with one another. While in-person interactions allowed for children to

experience the benefits of face-to-face interaction and to spend time with each other

authentically, children and parents reported that technology was able to help children stay in

consistent communication with one another in some way. In former years, children were able to

see each other and catch up every day at school, in after school programs, or at daily sports

practices. Without all of these consistent social outlets for children, technology and social media

helped children remain in touch with each other more frequently than if they did not have these

resources (Goldschmidt, 2020). With popular phone and video games such as Roblox, Among

Us, and Fortnight, children were also able to play interactive games with one another daily.

Using their devices in this interactive way seemed to almost facilitated a play date, as children

could spend large quantities of time together playing an activity (as opposed to spending short

amounts of time together outside doing an outdoor activity):

> "I think it's been positive, especially [...] with his cousins. He's been playing with
> them online. And then his one really good friend. And I think it's been really good
> that they [...] do something together even though it's not in person." - Parent 17.

> "I think calling can get old or boring. So it's kind of like, when you're playing
> games, you're like, doing something together, if you know what I mean." - Child
> 37

As the present research discussed, connectedness was important to prioritize during social

isolation. It appeared that video games and social media allowed children to experience

connectedness by having meaningful online experiences that facilitated conversation, bonding,

and activity with friends. According to Winther and Byrne (2020), playing video games and

utilizing social media was able to offer a temporary escape from the harsh realities of the

pandemic while also facilitating social engagement. Perhaps children within the current study

valued video games and social media as a means of entertainment and comfort to them during a

time when boredom and anxiety was high. The current study's Introduction highlighted both

benefits (e.g., Maor and Mitchem, 2015; Rice, Kurzban, and Ray, 2012) as well as concerns

(e.g., Liu, Wu, and Yao, 2015) regarding technology usage; yet, interviews lead results to believe

that technology was a likely contributor to children's ability to adapt, be resilient, and maintain

positive PWB.

Another refreshing finding regarding electronic devices was parents' understanding of their children's technology usage. An overwhelming amount of parents agreed that technology was a benefit to their children as opposed to an obstacle. One outcome of this result may be that parents began to realize that frequent technology usage was the way society was progressing:

> "I just think that's the way the world is moving. And I think that's how their generation is going to be defined. So I don't have a problem with it." - Parent 18

Another pattern was parents realizing that some battles were not worth fighting during the pandemic. Parents often said that their priorities shifted during the pandemic from keeping their children off screens to ensuring that they were occupied and that their mental health did not suffer. An overwhelming amount of parents said that they prioritized their children being able to unwind and relax as opposed to setting expectations for them to do more exhaustive or taxing activities. As one parent put it:

> "everybody's [anxious] and so if [technology] is a comforting thing, I don't think it's terrible. And we're stuck at home and they're not doing anything destructive. And yeah, I would love it if they wrote like the great American novel, but that's, you know, let's be realistic. This is a weird time we're all stuck in. If that's what it takes to get them through then, okay." - Parent 19

One last way parents expressed their understanding for technology usage benefitting their children's PWB was through mentoring their screen time. According to Kamenetz and Weiner (2019), when children turn to technology as a source of solace (as was the case during the pandemic) it is important for parents to not necessarily monitor their children's technology use, but to mentor it. Mentoring within the context of technology usage referred to parents understanding which apps and games kids are playing, and sharing and participating in these interests. When parents express understanding and enthusiasm in their children's technological activity, children can share and talk about their interests, and parents can even offer their support

if needed. Parent 18 described how he mentored his child's technology use, and how it benefited

her:

> "[...] the thing she's into now is this thing called Among Us. Which is like, an interactive game where they figure out who the killer is or the 'imposter.' I'm like, 'that's fine!' It seems to be a good thing. But you know, it's something I play with her a couple times to check it out and see how it works. And it seems innocuous enough. So to that extent, we pay attention to what she's doing." - Parent 18

According to Winther and Byrne (2020), parents being understanding of their children's

technology usage can foster healthier family dynamics and positive child PWB. The present

research appears to confirm this claim in that many parents exemplified an overall understanding

of their children's technology usage as a coping mechanism and means of connection during the

pandemic.

Parent understanding of technology usage seemed to benefit children's PWB during the

pandemic in that children appeared to be appreciative of their parents' support. Implications of

this finding may be that parents should shift their attitudes toward electronic usage from

restrictive to supportive, or as Kamenetz and Weiner (2019) put it, from monitoring to

mentoring. Parents should recognize the benefits of technology in their children's everyday lives,

and how it can help regulate their emotions and be an escape for them in times of anxiety.

Sensitive and/or Introverted Children

The perceived effects of being introverted or being more sensitive than others mainly

related to discussions regarding the social experience of online school. A handful of children

within the current sample claimed to value alone time, with some children even explicitly

identifying as introverts. These children reported that due to their personality and their

preferences, they felt more comfortable in remote school than their more extroverted peers. This

result might be due to introverts benefitting from alone time, and from being able to think, focus,

and explore interests in their own personal learning environment (Teppers et al, 2013). Likewise, sensitive children often become overwhelmed or overstimulated by social environments, and can focus more clearly when alone. Child 19 described this concept well when she said:

> "I feel a lot more comfortable doing [school] from my house. Sometimes, like during tests, I feel in a comfortable area, and like I don't know when other kids are done with [assignments]. So I'm just like, 'Oh, I'm fine. Everything's good.'"

In a recent article, a teacher also commented on her observations of children who were more sensitive or introverted than others in online school (Keene, 2020). She noticed that many of these children performed better in online than in-person school, and even participated more when online as opposed to in person. Her speculations aligned with the current study's results, confirming many of these findings. She noted that introverted children benefited from being able to work at their own pace and without the distractions of a crowded classroom. She also found that introverted children participated more due to being able to type their comments and questions over the Zoom "chat" feature. Child 15 said that one main reason she enjoyed online school was that she felt "more comfortable [participating through] using the chat than speaking in front of the whole class" and preferred to ask questions using the chat. As with Keene's research, the findings from the current study can only speak to this specific sample of children's experiences in online school. It may be the case that many introverts do not find online school to be more conducive to their learning needs than in-person school. However, the current findings of introverted children benefiting from virtual school for similar reasons to Keene's should be acknowledged. Perhaps parents can utilize such information to help their introverted child cope with potential remote school situations, and to discover the perks that schooling from home may hold for them.

Still, it is important to address that not all introverted or sensitive children within the current study's sample preferred online school to in-person school. Parents of introverted children spoke to this notion, saying that even their children who are introverted and who benefit from alone time were still craving in-person peer interactions. These children may have been more capable of managing their current social isolation than more extroverted children, but overall there were still benefits to in-person school that introverts felt that they missed:

> "I think everyone's kind of suffering from this [...] I guess you could say there are people out there who found it easier to adjust to this lifestyle, and then it bothers them less [...] I just think we're all suffering." - Parent 18

This finding may go back to the heart of the present study: children in their later childhood years, whether introverted or not, heavily benefit from peer interaction in both their well-being and in their development (Issawi & Dauphin, 2016; Villarruel & Luster, 2006; Connell & Wellborne, 1991).

Children Who Prefer Routines/Children Who Think Rigidly

Within the current study's Introduction, the potential lack of routine during the pandemic was expected to be a factor that would most influence children who specifically preferred routine (Grayer, Jarrett, and Pomrenze, 2020). Through the interviews, however, it was discovered that establishing a routine was at least somewhat of a priority among all families. Parents reported how beneficial routine was for all children, not just children who were more rigid or scheduled. Parents were able to provide routine in their children's lives through both structured and unstructured ways. Two crucial ways children maintained a meaningful routine were identified as the themes, "Extracurricular Activities" and "Online School." Children who participated in extracurricular activities, especially ones that they had been doing for years, reported enjoying those activities and that they contributed positively to their PWB. These findings may be related

to the research around meaningful participation and high expectations being protective factors

for and building resilience among children (Constantine, Bernard, & Diaz, 1999). Meaningful

participation refers to children participating in activities that they care about, having a sense of

responsibility, and being able to contribute to a greater cause. High expectations refer to children

feeling as though they can and will succeed in the areas in their lives that are important to them

through some form of direct or indirect validation. Engaging in extracurricular activities may

have allowed children to feel like they served a purpose, were able to contribute to a task that

they cared about, and feel as though they were succeeding in an activity that they felt important

to them. These types of engagements, in turn, may have given children a sense of meaning and

high expectations in a time when finding purpose was difficult:

> "They started [classes] again, that was our saving grace in the spring was that
> there were some classes. Because what else are you doing right now? And, and it
> was good to engage in something that was enjoyed and missed." - Parent 20

The theme "Online School," although providing its own hardships and barriers to other

layers of children's PWB, may have also contributed to meaningful participation and high

expectations as well. Parents and children emphasized that having a consistent reason to get up

every morning, and to have specific academic goals to accomplish each day made children feel

more occupied and motivated than they did in the summer or during the beginning of lockdown

when online school was chaotic and disorganized. Furthermore, online school required children

to engage in academic tasks where they were held to some type of standard, and where they were

validated by teacher or parent appraisal if they achieved. Although online school was by no

means the ideal form of learning, it did seem to promote a sense of consistency and motivation in

children's lives, and may have played a role in making children feel a sense of responsibility,

contribution, and accomplishment. According to Denworth (2020), having consistency and a

stable routine instills predictability and equilibrium within children's lives. Reliably having some

type of school experience every day most likely gave children the sense of security and

motivation that they craved during such an unstable time, contributing to their PWB.

Many parents also learned that having a routine does not necessarily have to involve

rushing around to a million activities and being constantly busy. Rather, routine can just be a

consistent pattern in one's life that brings meaning to them in some way. The theme "Relaxing

and Slowing Down" emerged from this shift in perspective, and children and parents alike

expressed their appreciation for learning to do less, putting less pressure on their lives, and living

in the moment:

> "Um, well, we usually go walk, like, around the neighborhood and to a creek
> that's near our house. And I really like just staying outside, because there's usually
> not a lot of people there. And so I like, I don't have to have a mask on, and [...]
> Sometimes I throw rocks in the creek [...] I think it's just like, really peaceful." -
> Child 24

> "[...] with three kids, everybody is pretty involved in their activities. You know,
> [...] we were definitely pushing the limits of, 'if you're five minutes late, that
> throws off the whole afternoon for everybody else.' So I think overall, it's kind of
> a blessing that everybody's not as busy. And we will probably try to keep that
> [and] maintain some type of less crazy running around [schedule] when we get
> back to normal." - Parent 14

By having less obligations, children were able to engage in various unstructured activities

that they enjoyed, discover new hobbies, and relax and take in nature. One hope that parents

reported from this experience of slowing down was that children and parents alike will realize

that life does not have to be so fast-paced and structured all of the time. Despite the challenges

that came out of activity cancellations and restrictions, many parents felt that their children's

PWB benefited from alleviation of pressure and expectations on their day-to-day lives. Parent 22

predicted that "there might be this realization [among kids] of, 'I need my downtime.'" Maybe

the pandemic will allow families to find a healthier balance of activity and schedule, and

relaxation and leisure.

As discussed within the Results section, the theme "Appreciation of Slowing Down and

Relaxing" overlapped frequently with the theme "Family Connectedness." Parents and children

both reported appreciating how more down time opened up opportunities for spending quality

time with family. In this sense, having less structured and busy of a routine created the

opportunity for the protective factor of "Family Connectedness." Perhaps parents being able to

instill a balance of activity and meaningful engagement along with providing love and family

support allowed children to be better able to adapt to their situation:

> "I would say, I definitely think, you know, it's, it feels a little cliche to say, but the
> one silver lining of COVID times is that it's brought family, you know, family
> time to the forefront, we spend so much more time together, the four of us than
> we did before. And I think that's a really good thing [...] I'd say we're closer than
> we've ever been." - Parent 30

> "Well, they're working, but like, you know, my mom and dad have a couple
> breaks. And so it's nice to like, well, before everything, I felt like everything was
> rushed. Like, *everything* was rushed. And when we talked, it was really rushed
> and we couldn't like, talk thoroughly. But now we have, like, time to talk *really*."
> - Child 29

All of this down time families had during the pandemic allowed parents and children to

spend more quality time with each other. As chid 29 said, families actually had the time to truly

talk and be present with each other more than in a typical year, promoting closeness and bonding

among families.

Parents and children also especially reported having the opportunity to eat more meals

together, which they identified as a positive outcome of the pandemic. Research has shown that

family meals foster family connectedness and healthier daily dynamics (Stanford Children's

Health, n.d.). Having the time to enjoy a leisurely meal without having to rush from place to

place most likely contributed to the quality time that families were able to spend together:

> "we try to, you know, we eat dinner together every night [...] At night, I would say
> probably half the time, maybe we'll watch a show together. We've been [...]
> watching the *Great British Bake Off*. So you know, we've watched as a family [...]
> So yeah, I mean, I think you know, there's definitely more together time as a
> family [...] My wife's schedule is the kids' schedule. Because she's working from
> home, so that's been an impactful one on all of that." - Parent 31

Kamenetz and Weiner (2019) noted that it's the "little changes" that parents provide that

can "make a big difference" in children's lives. When parents take small segments out of their

day to engage in a shared activity, children tend to feel more supported and valued. Even doing

something as simple as enjoying an episode of *The Great British Bake Off* together can bring the

whole family together, and foster family bonding through sharing a common leisure activity that

the whole family enjoys (Features, 2017; Kamenetz & Weiner, 2019). These reports along with

supporting research hopefully imply positive news, that the families within the current study will

grow stronger from the extended time they spent together during the pandemic.

Another hopeful implication is that families will learn from and reflect upon their

experience of slowing down their daily routines and enjoying moments of relaxation. Reports

have shown that parents who work extensive hours, have minimal flexibility in their work

schedules, and face challenges in prioritizing family needs such as child-care have higher levels

of stress (Galinsky & Stein, 1990). Meanwhile, when parents are granted more flexibility and are

given the opportunity to prioritize family life, they achieve a better work-life balance and feel

that their familial needs are met. Parents within the current sample confirmed Galinsky and

Stein's research within their interviews, noting the benefits that having a healthier work-life

balance had on both their children and themselves:

> "[...] if [my husband and I] get a break, both of us will walk out of our offices and just hang out. Even if it's like 15 minutes with a kid talking about whatever [...] we had a lot of games we've played with them lately [...] [and my husband] was getting to a point where he was traveling quite a bit. But he doesn't have that now that he's home. So I think in that sense, like, it's nice for them to have him home more [...] now he gets more time to do stuff with them." - Parent 27

Families within the current study seemed grateful for the opportunities the pandemic gave them to achieve a healthier work-family balance. Perhaps parents will learn from their experiences of getting to spend more genuine, quality time with their children, and will prioritize family over work and other obligations in the future. Furthermore, enjoying more down time as a family also appeared to impact children by teaching them the importance of relaxing. Enjoying leisure time as a family sends children the message that life does not have to be so serious and structured, and that it is important to be able to decompress and unwind (The School Run, 2021). Perhaps these restful experiences children had with their families during the pandemic will resonate with them, and they will take to heart the value of having restful and unstructured time with family.

Children and Anxiety

Previous research found that many children who already struggled with anxiety before the pandemic reported even greater feelings of anxiety during the pandemic (Rethink Mental Illness, 2020). It was therefore predicted that children within the current study who tended to be more anxious than others would experience greater PWB challenges or anxiety levels than those who were not prone to feeling anxious; however, the current research revealed that this was not actually the case. Rather, children who were naturally more anxious as well as children who were not both reported having greater levels of anxiety during the pandemic. The children in the current sample reported experiencing anxiety in either of these two forms: anxiety related to

COVID, and generalized anxiety that was likely due to the conditions of the year 2020 as a whole.

According to Bain (2020), children who are exposed to traumatic stress often become overwhelmed and helpless. Traumatic stress in the context of COVID-19 involves perceived threats to one's health and safety, or more specifically, experiencing situations in which one has either come into contact with the virus, or has known someone with the virus. This appeared to be the case within the current research, as the children who were in the closest contact with COVID or who knew of instances where people caught COVID reported being more anxious and worried about the actual illness and of a loved one getting sick:

> "It makes me feel like, like a little nervous. And maybe a little worried. And sometimes maybe a bit sad, because you never know when it's gonna end or like, if something bad is gonna happen and it's gonna spread like it did in the beginning [...] it would be really, really scary to have it catch on to a family member." - Child 1

Some children in the current sample also seemed to experience a generalized type of anxiety. These children were often not able to specify exactly why they felt more anxious during the pandemic than in a typical year. Although some of them articulated that socializing with other children less and spending more time at home made them feel more lonely and sad relative to previous years, many children often had a difficult time describing the specific root causes of their anxiety. Parents too noticed their children's anxieties peaked during the pandemic, witnessing more outbursts, behavior changes, and general fearfulness. While parent insights into their children's general anxieties will be discussed in-depth later on, parent observations will also be briefly mentioned here, as they prompt discussion as to why children may have had greater general anxiety during the pandemic:

> "[...] it's just it's everything, the weight of it all [...] he couldn't, he can't even verbalize it. But you know, that feeling like, you just cry and you don't even know

why you're crying [...] he definitely had a couple days where he literally, he's a happy kid and would just start crying, and like, he didn't even know why he was crying." - Parent 5

"He's definitely more anxious. And I think the fact that he's in this situation and sort of scared [...] I think it definitely, all of that together, is making him quite more anxious [...] he'll take it out on his homework or his school, or just, maybe he gets anxious about like, his music, it's just different things [...] he's not sleeping well [...] his worries are not necessarily about a certain thing. I think he just doesn't even know, he doesn't know why he's worrying sometimes." - Parent 6

As these parents described, this more generalized type of anxiety caused children to worry about certain facets of their life to greater extents than before, and to act out/have outbursts with no distinct justification behind their erratic behavior. Research on children's mental health during the pandemic speculated two reasons for these behaviors that align with the current study's findings. The first hypothesized reason is that loneliness itself produced mild to severe anxiety symptoms among children and adolescents during the coronavirus pandemic (Loades et al., 2020). Consistent loneliness can cause children to feel less connected to their peers and less supported by a peer group. These feelings of loss and disconnection can produce negative mental health outcomes. The second hypothesized reason is that living through the pandemic itself could be a traumatic experience (NYU Langone Health, 2020). Having the news on all day or hearing discussions of panic, uncertainty, and fear can have significant impacts on children's stress levels. The current findings both echo and may add another layer to these ideas. Due to isolation, the children in the current sample reported feeling disconnected from their peers. Further, as some children and many parents noted, they were also struggling with the fear and uncertainty of a global crisis. A potential third factor at play was that children also had fewer activities to occupy them and that brought meaning into their lives. Without having these activities, children may have been less able to distract themselves from both their everyday loneliness and stressors, and also the major stressors of the world. These factors coinciding could

very well have produced greater feelings of anxiety within children. In another study, McClurg

(2020) interviewed parents of children who were struggling with mental health and well-being

during the pandemic. One parent described a feeling of disconnection and boredom in his

children well when he said "They're giving up hope [...] There's nowhere to go. There's nothing

to do. There's nothing to connect with. There's just deflatedness." This quote matches the

findings in the current study well in that the child participants who experienced the perfect storm

of loneliness, boredom, and fear seemed to experience the greatest feelings of anxiety.

Lastly, although it was also stated that the children within the current sample had

protective factors such as familial support and other factors in their lives that brought them

meaning, not all children in the sample experienced particularly high levels of these protective

factors. The children that felt more anxiety prone may have felt like they were not receiving

adequate amounts of support, or that they did not engage in enough activities to supplement their

feelings of meaning and purpose.

Children With a Learning Disability or Disorder

When setting out to do this research, I wondered if children who had a learning disability

or disorder, or who utilized an IEP or 504 plan for school would face more academic hardship

than children who did not need these learning accommodations. Interviews revealed both the

areas in which children who utilized an IEP or 504 plan struggled with remote school as well as

the areas in which these children benefited from schooling at home. In line with the overall

results of the study, children who utilized either an IEP or 504 reported having similar PWB

during the pandemic as they did before.

The primary factor of virtual school that children seemed to benefit from was expressed

through the theme, "Freedom in Their Learning Environment." Child 12 discussed how he

enjoyed the freedom of doing his assignments on his own without restrictions from teachers or

the classroom:

> "[I prefer] online because [...] I can make a lot of random stuff, because [...] at school, my teacher usually just sets up the stuff, so we basically *have* to make it, sort of. Here, they're not, like, forcing us." - Child 12

The concept of having greater freedom in one's learning environment was also commonly

described as an academic benefit by children in the sample who did not utilize learning

accommodations. For children who struggled with the distractions of a busy classroom and who

found it difficult to follow classroom rules and restrictions, however, having freedom in learning

environment may have been even more beneficial. This was a common theme reported by both

the children and parents of the children within the current study who utilized an IEP or 504 plan.

These findings could draw implications that teachers, counselors, and others who participate in

developing IEP and 504 plans may want to consider when returning to the typical in-person

classroom environment. Specifically addressing the ways in which children's IEP and 504 plans

can accommodate having more control and freedom within the classroom may greatly benefit

these children's learning experiences.

Some teachers have already put into practice learning initiatives that support the current

study's findings. For example, teacher Matthew Bebbington (2012) led a school project that

allowed students ages 11 to 15 to control their own learning, their own assignment deadlines, and

their own learning environments. The results of this initiative found that students produced high

quality work, were engaged throughout the day, and reported appreciating taking a longer time

on assignments as it allowed them to better concentrate on their work than if they were under

strict deadlines. One may be able to conclude that being allowed to complete assignments at

one's own pace along with having greater freedom in the academic setting is beneficial to all

students, and allows for a more comfortable and positive learning experience. Based upon

Bebbington's initiative (2012), articles that discussed the benefits of having freedom in learning

environment during remote school (e.g., McDonald, 2020; Grose, 2020), and the current study, it

may be wise for schools to readapt their current models of imposing strict deadlines and

classroom rules. Taking the pressure off students to complete and turn in work by specific dates

may induce unnecessary stress on children who are already struggling, or on children who prefer

having ample time to make their work as meaningful as they can. Similarly, imposing strict

classroom rules and expectations may actually restrict students' ability to learn to their full

potential, and hold them back from expressing their creativity and passion for their learning.

The two major seetbackbacks children with an IEP or 504 faced during virtual school

were expressed in the themes "Accommodations Not Translating Well to Virtual Learning" and

"Overwhelming/Difficult." The main reason accommodations did not translate well to an online

format were that the accommodations often involved social behaviors, physical classroom

accommodations, and in-person teacher interactions. Children and their teachers seemed to feel

helpless in how to offer such valuable in-person assistance and aid. In commenting on how

virtual learning can impact children with disabilities, Peter (2020) wrote that lack of in-person

assistance from faculty along with isolation from other students can induce feelings of anxiety,

nervousness, and isolation for children in need of learning assistance. This makes sense, as the

theme that arose from these struggles was "Difficulty/Overwhelming." Children's parents

contributed most to the discussion on the emotional toll that online school had on their children:

> "He's not always sure what step he should do first, and he's just, he's very
> stressed, very overwhelmed. [He'll say] 'I'm stressed out, this is too much. I want
> to go back into school. I feel like I'm a bad student, I feel like everybody else is
> doing better than me.'" - Parent 21

Not being able to utilize accommodations along with having to adapt to a new learning system was challenging enough. When children were also unable to physically communicate with their teachers, and when they were already isolated from their peers, it was understandable that they might have become lonely, anxious, and overwhelmed.

Since schools have shifted to online learning, the National Center For Learning Disabilities (NCLD) has produced a guide to address the issues that children who depend on specialized instructional services may face during online school, and how parents and teachers can best support them (A Parent's Guide to Virtual Learning, 2020). The NCLD's guide applies to any virtual learning situation, and is therefore a useful resource for any scenario in which children with an IEP or 504 plan are tasked with online school. Specifically, the report advised that, as face-to face interactions can be vital in picking up physical and verbal cues from children, teachers should primarily use their videos when teaching the class, and encourage the entire class to keep their cameras on as well. Teachers and parents should also consistently measure children's needs and understandings through weekly (or even daily) check ins. Children will also need help organizing time, and setting up specific spaces in one's home where learning can take place will be beneficial to focus and productivity. Finally, students with accommodations are often used to benefitting from using multiple ways of engaging with the material. Online information should be represented in various formats in order to accommodate all children and their various learning styles and needs. If teachers and parents impart these tactics and services onto these children, we may see gains in both confidence in learning, and in overall PWB.

Parental Insight Into Children's Experiences and Potential Long-Term Pandemic Impacts

In hopes of gaining greater insight into children's thoughts and feelings during the pandemic, I acquired parents' perspectives on their children's experiences as opposed to solely interviewing children themselves. The literature referenced instances in which gaining solely the parent perspective exposed areas of misinterpretation and misconception of children's thoughts and feelings (e.g., Simpson, Adams, Wheeley, & Keen, 2019). Oppositely, gaining just the child's perspective has tended to scratch only one layer of the whole picture of their experiences (e.g., Cagulada & Koller, 2020; Brogaard-Clausen, & Hargreaves, 2019). Findings from the current study validated the previous research in confirming the benefits of gaining both child and parent testimony. Parents of the children in this sample gave responses that echoed and confirmed children's feelings, and also revealed how receptive they were towards their children as they faced adversity. Parents also offered detailed insight into children's thoughts and feelings during this time that children themselves were not always able to discuss in depth. Without the parent perspective, my research would not be nearly as conclusive or comprehensive. Therefore it is important to discuss the implications that gaining the parent perspective had upon this research.

Parents Being Aware of Their Children's Feelings and Being Receptive to Them

One important outcome of gaining the parent perspective into their children's experiences was that parents appeared to be aware of their children's feelings during the pandemic, and reported being receptive to those feelings. One instance in which many parents expressed this awareness and understanding was their insight they gave into their children's anxieties. As stated in the results, while children for the most part could identify that they had increasing amounts of anxiety during the pandemic as opposed to other years, they were unable to articulate why they felt this to be the case. For example, Child 6 described this form of anxiety as being "in my

head," but had difficulty explaining what that meant and why he felt this way. Thankfully, parent

testimony added another layer to the discussions surrounding why some children were feeling

more anxious during the pandemic than in a typical year. Parental consensus centered around a

few concepts. First, in a year when children were doing less, anxieties peaked more in certain

areas:

> "[...] you've got like, the anxiety piece of just the school and all that other stuff.
> And there's less of that... but there's almost a little *more* of it at the same time,
> because she wants more homework, [...] she's kind of like, 'Am I doing enough?'
> And 'Why am I not doing enough?' And then when there *is* a math quiz or test
> and it's a little harder than the others, there's more, there's more to it, because
> there's nothing else to be worried about! It's like, 'This is it!' And 'Was I listening
> enough?' And it just peaks a little bit higher. And so I think there's just a shift,
> there's a different kind of anxiety with it." - Parent 22

Warner (2021) cited therapist Phyllis Fagell who held similar theories to that of Parent 22

and others within the current study. According to Fagell, in a year where children had such little

control over the variables in their lives, their anxieties and perfectionism often peaked in the few

areas that they could control. The fact that some of the parent opinions within the current study

aligned with those of professionals in the psychology field may reveal how vital it was to obtain

the parent perspective on their children's experiences. It is likely that many parents carry a

remarkable understanding into their children's lives that can offer a thoughtful layer of insight

into their feelings and behaviors.

Parents also felt that 2020 overall was an intense and stressful year. Living through the

pandemic, experiencing social isolation, and witnessing a monumental election year may have all

been too much for children to handle. Parents felt that being exposed to constant uncertainty and

stressful news updates all while having less going on in their lives may have provoked greater

feelings of nervousness and anxiety within children:

"And I think that they're, you know, 2020, there's more than just the pandemic to be nervous [and] anxious about, you know. There's so much [...] going on with the election. And he's, you know, he sometimes will listen to NPR with me in the car. And so he has a pretty good sense of what was going on. And he's pretty interested in that. So I think that his baseline anxiety may have been a little bit higher this year [...]" - Parent 13

"I think like the election paired with, like, a pandemic, paired with my kids being home all the time and my husband being home all the time. Like, it's just a lot. [...] Like, I just don't you know, there's so much going on right now. Like I just try to be choosy about the things that I discuss in front of them because I don't want to feed into any sort of unnecessary anxiety." - Parent 3

Parental insight into their children's feelings did not always necessarily mean that they were able to help their children deal with the stressors or anxieties their children felt during the pandemic. Rather, parental insight offered a different type of benefit in that it allowed myself to gain a deeper more coherent understanding of child PWB during this unique moment in time. Many children noticed a difference, or a shift within themselves during the pandmeic. This finding alone is significant, but only scratches the surface of what I sought to uncover within the present research. Parents added another crucial layer to the evidence, often matching their children's feelings with their own descriptions and theories on their children's changing anxieties. In other words, obtaining the parent perspective was extremely helpful in this sense, as it offered more of a "why" into children's experiences and the changes they felt. Lending these explanations allowed myself to form more concrete conclusions, and to connect how such an unprecedented time in children's lives can greatly impact their feelings of anxiety and their behaviors.

Gaining the parent perspective also revealed the extent to which parents were empathetic to their children's feelings and receptive to their children's needs. A large sum of parents appeared to be extremely understanding of their children's current situations, and expressed this understanding through many of the themes discussed, from "Electronic Usage" to "Needing

Space." This parental behavior in itself can be considered a protective factor for children experiencing social isolation, as it most likely contributed to children experiencing a sense of family connectedness. While having family connectedness involves feeling a sense of closeness to family members, a large part of this protective factor is also parents being supportive and understanding of their children (Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, and Neumark-Sztainer, 2007). High levels of parent awareness of their children's emotions during the pandemic presumably contributed to children's abilities to adapt, emerge resilient, and maintain adequate PWB levels. Parents had their own comments to make on why they had compassion and felt that it was important to be receptive to their children during this time:

> "I think parents have to be more, more flexible now with that kind of stuff. Because there, I mean, there's the potential for their kids to be anxious and to be like 'this sucks, I don't get to see my friends anymore, I don't get to do anything I want to do anymore..." - Parent 8

Stern, Borelli, and Smiley (2015) found that parents who displayed empathy towards their children fostered healthier and stronger parent-child relationships. Further, healthy parent-child communication and parent praise for flexible and adaptable child behaviors have contributed to children's senses of security and confidence in adapting during the pandemic (Warner, 2021). Finally, research has also shown that children can sense when their parents validate their feelings and are empathetic towards their situations (Maza, 2020). The current study's findings may confirm the prior research. As parents were empathetic toward their children and outwardly recognized their ability to manage the new and challenging situations they faced, children may have felt validated and supported, and were therefore able to remain resilient and maintain positive PWB.

The majority of children also reported that their relationships with their siblings and family as a whole either remained strong or improved during the pandemic. These results may

have been due to parent empathy, support, and autonomy fostering not only positive parent-child relationships, but bettering the overall family dynamic and environment. This finding would also confirm Neubauer, Schmidt, Kramer, and Schmiedek's (2021), and La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, and Deci's (2000) studies on autonomy supportive parent-child relationships. Parental autonomy has been shown to promote secure attachment within children, and to support child development as they approach adolescence and desire greater independence (La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000). As discussed earlier, giving children autonomy can contribute to a positive feedback loop in which children are independent, giving their parents the space to fulfill their own needs. This behavior can in turn promote positive PWB within parents, positive PWB in their children, and consequently, strengthens family cohesion (Neubauer, Schmidt, Kramer, and Schmiedek, 2021). Based upon parent and child testimony on family connectedness and overall PWB, along with the prior research laid out, one can draw prominent implications. Primarily, that parent support, understanding, and ability to empathize with their children will contribute positively to children's PWB, especially when children face adversity. Further, the way parents shape the tone of their situation and their family environment can have positive impacts on child PWB. These messages hold important takeaways for parents. Although children may no longer be facing challenges of the pandemic and of social isolation, this parenting concept can be applied to numerous situations in which children have the opportunity to become resilient when faced with hardship.

How Parents Think That COVID Will Impact Their Children's Development and Their Future

The primary concern parents expressed in their interviews was that their children would regress socially. They worried that their children's extended time in isolation, particularly from a

school setting, could cause children to unlearn social cues and how to communicate with others.

Many parents also felt that other forms of seeing children such as through social distancing and

through technology could contribute to children's regression in their ability to hold authentic,

in-person conversations:

> "Socially, I think it's a nightmare for these kids, I think they're going to forget
> how to interact with each other, they're going to forget what, what it is to do
> things as a team, as a group, to depend on other people." - Parent 18

Some experts echoed these parents' concerns, saying that disconnection from school,

especially from peers and teachers, could lead to social regression (Clopton, 2020). Having

social skills is in part, a learned trait, and one that needs to be practiced (Denworth, 2020). These

in-person social interactions cannot be adequately substituted through Zoom or other

technological means. Without consistent exposure to natural, authentic social situations, children

could regress in their ability to communicate effectively and efficiently with others. Parent 15

felt that children "will all have to relearn a lot of social cues and social interactions and

protocols." Another parent expressed their concern over how difficult it may be for children to

communicate in and work toward a goal in a group setting:

> "You know, definitely the practice of social interaction with other kids, I
> definitely worry about that, and how, when they get back to school, or you know,
> back in larger groups, I think that's definitely going to take some, you know,
> patience and training and more practice interacting. And I just, I wonder if, you
> know, they will not want to go to like, big types of events…" - Parent 14

These parents' fears pose realistic and thoughtful discussion. Perhaps children will have

to re-adapt to large gatherings or big social events. Maybe communicating with others and

working in a group will be more challenging for children when they are once again exposed to

group settings. Some experts on child development, however, have said that parents should not

heavily worry about children's readjustment back to normal life once pandemic restrictions end.

As long as children have the proper resources, as in the current study's sample, and were not experiencing toxic stress, children will "recover and may build resiliency that will serve them in the long run" (Dastagir & Wong, 2020). This concept was also discussed by parents within interviews, as another developmental outcome they predicted for their children (which was also the overarching theme of the study) was the theme "Resilience and Adaptation."

Despite parent concerns that their children could regress socially, the vast majority of parent participants predicted that their children would build resilience from the pandemic. This prediction was largely due to their observations of their children's ability to adapt to their current situation:

> "There's a piece of it in terms of resiliency, and learning that life doesn't always go the way you would like, and things don't work the way you would like. And you can't always approach things in the same way [...] they will learn to, that they have the ability to, to manage through that. Because they have lived it, whether they were doing it themselves, or they were seeing us as their parents do it around them, as well as friends." - Parent 20

LoBue (2020) conveyed that children can learn resilience and adaptation largely through their parents' examples and from the examples of those present within their lives. Similarly, Warner (2021) cited Dr. Luther's research, reporting that parent mood and their framing of the situation can have significant impacts on children's abilities to adapt and emerge resilient from the pandemic. As Parent 20 stated, children may have developed adaptive behaviors through watching their parents reactions and the ways in which they dealt with their own challenges. Importantly, children also went through this experience alongside their peers. Children may have learned positive adaptive behaviors from their peers, or perhaps were able to receive reassurance and validation from their current experience through their peers that allowed them to better handle their situation. Maybe experiencing a hardship alongside others made the situation more

manageable, as they were able to go through it with someone else as opposed to on their own. While children within the current study experienced loneliness, they did not necessarily go through this experience alone.

Furthermore, according to Dastagir and Wong (2020), a healthy amount of adversity can often be beneficial for children. Especially when one has ample buffers, supportive relationships, and some level of stability, as the children within the current study reported, children should hopefully be able to cope with adversity and learn how to healthfully cope with hardship. The majority of parents recognized the supportive factors their children had around them to build resilience:

> "And again, you know, we're in a very fortunate situation, and have a lot of privilege, you know, to have a very stable situation and, and enough space in our home and, you know, to, to have not been financially affected by the pandemic. So, I think that all that stability is helpful. And, you know, and then in addition to having the other outlets, you know, to have lots of activities that you can participate in both, you know, both virtually and in person, we were fortunate enough to, to have them in camp all summer. So I think in that way [...] it's not so dramatically different than before." - Parent 13

Parent 13 along with many others felt that experiencing the adversity of the pandemic while having the supportive factors to help them get through this time will have lasting positive impacts on their children. Parents noticed the ways in which their children adapted to this new way of life, and coped with daily changes and challenges they faced. Hopefully, as parents within the current study believed, children will only grow stronger from experiencing this time of widespread social isolation.

As mentioned within the Results section, while this "Resilience and Adaptation" sub-theme emerged as the overarching theme of the study, it also emerged as a sub-theme within the parent table because of the in-depth perspective that parents offered into this topic. While

interviewing, most of the children did not specifically discuss or verbally reflect upon their

abilities to adapt and emerge resilient from the pandemic. Rather, this theme was inferred

through other language that children used around the topics they discussed, along with their

reports on having positive PWB at the end of each interview. Through parent interviews, I was

able to obtain a more explicit and in-depth insight on children's adaptability and resilience.

Parents relayed examples of times that they witnessed their children's adaptability, and they gave

explanations as to why they thought their children will become more adaptable and resilient

human beings from living through such an unprecedented time in their lives:

> "I want to think that [...] having to be like, quickly adaptable and seeing like, a
> shift in everything around him from the teachers being like, 'oh, okay, I'm now
> teaching you out of my living room, and, or my kitchen counter.' And [...]
> hopefully, that's the kind of stuff that is going to be really good for him to have
> seen versus teachers that are just in their classroom and everything is, you know,
> exactly how they planned it at the beginning of the morning, like no curve balls
> thrown. I think in a way, that's probably really good to see as a kid, you know, just
> to realize that [...] we never know what tomorrow is gonna bring. And you just
> have to be able to adapt. So I'd like to think that this is going to have a lasting
> impact on him." - Parent 12

Many parents seemed to be attuned to and aware of their children's experiences and the

ways in which children adapted, even if children themselves did not have this awareness at the

time. The way parents recognized and spoke to the resilience and adaptability they saw within

their children emphasized the emergence of this topic being the study's overarching theme, and

arguably its most prominent finding. Even further, many parents predicted that learning to adjust

to life's different "curveballs" may impact their children for the better, with children not offering

these types of sentiments. Gaining the parent perspective therefore also offered greater insight

into how the pandemic would affect children in the future, specifically in regards to the way

children may prevail and grow stronger from their experiences. This parent recognition and

insight was also conveyed within their predictions on the final major impact that the pandemic

might hold for their children. This parent prediction was expressed as the theme "Instilling

Gratitude."

As explained earlier, the majority of children reported having gratitude for in-person

schooling, something they felt they took advantage of in their lives before the pandemic. While

children primarily expressed having more appreciation for that aspect of their lives, many parents

had their own opinions on how their children's gratitude would increase post-pandemic:

> "I mean, I think that the pandemic is the best gift they could be given [...] they're
> old enough now to [...] remember what it was like before the pandemic, and
> they're gonna appreciate life after the pandemic [...] they're growing up so fast,
> and in such a beautiful way that I feel like this pandemic, to me, I wouldn't
> change a thing. And I'm actually thrilled it's happening. Because this time last
> year, everyone just like, expected the world [...] and the people struggling the
> most during the pandemic are the ones that, you know, basically, were wasting
> their time with mindless activities, they weren't actually enjoying what was in
> front of them [...] to me, it's the best gift I could ever have. Because I would
> never have as much time with my family." - Parent 29

Parents 29 along with many others made a valid argument. Overall, the children in this

sample experienced sudden changes and losses in their lives while also observing how their lives

were not drastically altered by the pandemic. Perhaps this experience will foster awareness

within these children, and therefore a greater sense of appreciation than they had before this

major life shift. Parod (2020) supported these parents' opinions in her piece, *Finding Gratitude*

Amidst a Pandemic. Parod addressed the fear, stress, and loss that people everywhere had

experienced during the pandemic. Yet, she also highlighted the newfound blessings that brought

people together during such a unique time:

> "In this time of quiet, we took walks down our streets, reconnected with our
> neighbors, and sat outside reading books or looking at stars. We taught
> grandparents and older family members how to Zoom or FaceTime so that we
> could maintain our close relationships while staying safely apart. We were no
> longer too busy to color, paint, and mail birthday cards or handwritten notes to

friends and family. Some of us explored new hobbies and talents, while others called long-distance friends on the phone...”

This opinion piece echoes the present research well. Along with the hardships families faced, they also learned the benefits of slowing down, formed closer relationships with loved ones, and connected with people and passions in new ways. All of these consequences may change the way in which individuals, adults and children alike, choose to live their lives. As the parents in the current study predicted, their children are likely to develop a greater sense of gratitude both for what they lost during the pandemic, and also for what they gained.

Within parents' discussions of gratitude, the topic of perspective taking and empathy emerged as well. Some parents spoke to the ways in which they taught their children perspective taking during this time, believing that their children may have increased their ability to empathize and be appreciative, resulting in them becoming more grateful human beings:

> “But I sort of feel like, in some ways, like maybe they'll be slightly more empathic human beings, because they, you know, like, I have tried to make a point of telling them that like, we're the lucky ones right now. You know, like, I mean, this sucks, don't get me wrong, but we are like, technically speaking, like, we're the lucky ones. Like we're doing okay.” - Parent 3

> “I keep saying [to my children], ‘Nobody's sick. We're all healthy. We're still at a home where we can do things. We have a yard, we have all this stuff that we can do.’” - Parent 5

In Ellen Galinsky's book *Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs,* she addressed how parents can model and teach perspective taking for their children (Galinsky, 2010). Parents can do this by listening to their children and being empathetic to their feelings. Parents can also teach perspective taking by having their children practice seeing situations from the viewpoint of others in their lives, whether it be a child in their class or a character in a movie. The current research may have exemplified this concept, as many parents reported having discussions with their children -- similar to the ones described in the quotes above -- about

gratitude, appreciation, and being thankful for their health. These conversations parents had with their children appeared to resonate with the children, with the prime example from the current study being children's gratitude for in-person schooling. One common hope mentioned within parent interviews was a hope that this sense of gratitude and appreciation for what they have in their lives will last, and that children who grew up during the pandemic will become more grateful and empathetic human beings than children who grew up in generations before.

Limitations

As briefly mentioned earlier, some of the current study's limitations were that all of the children in this sample seemed to have healthy family relationships; the interviews captured children's family dynamics during one specific moment of the whole pandemic time period; all children within the sample had either a sibling or a pet (or both) at home with them during isolation; and each child within the study had access to resources to assist them in online school. These individual limitations were all thought to be a part of two overarching limitations that seemed to play defining roles in the current study's results. The first major limitation was that the sample all came from privileged backgrounds (i.e., majority white families, middle to upper-class households). It is likely that these demographics contributed to many of the protective factors that children within the current sample were fortunate enough to have, such as family connectedness, meaningful participation, and high expectations. That said, the sample's homogeneity is seen as a limitation, as the original premise of the current study was to hear from children of various racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds in order to compare children's different experiences as opposed to hearing from families of similar backgrounds. The second major limitation was the fact that this research was conducted between November of 2020 and January of 2021, a short two month window of time during the coronavirus pandemic.

Perhaps holding interviews during such a small segment of time meant that child and parent reports of high levels of resilience was only temporary. Both of these limitations were thought to greatly contribute to children feeling supported, adjusted, and motivated while facing adversity. Finally, in choosing to perform the current study on the child's experience of one major life event in the year 2020, the current study missed out on hearing how the other major life events of the year 2020 impacted families, as well as how parents were impacted as well, as parents' well-being plays a significant role in child well-being (e.g., Morin, 2021; Kobak, Abbott, Zisk & Bounoua, 2017). Therefore, the last limitation discussed will be the factors that the current study overlooked due to its focus on just one life-altering aspect of such a momentous year, and how focusing on only the child's perspective may have hindered the analysis of how parent PWB can influence their child/children's PWB.

Access to Resources During the Pandemic

As briefly mentioned earlier, external factors turned this sample into a convenience sample, as school districts began to return to in-person schooling, at least partially. One reason that many schools transitioned back to in-person schooling was because educators and communities were seeing firsthand the detrimental effects that social isolation was having on children (Natanson & Meckler, 2020). The participants in the current study relayed the challenges that remote school inflicted upon children. Other articles published during the pandemic supported these findings, reporting that children at large were challenged by many different aspects of online school, from the lack of social exposure to lack of academic achievement (e.g., Johnson, 2020; Natanson & Meckler, 2020; North, 2020). Yet, the children within my study's sample may have suffered to a lesser extent than children from backgrounds that were not captured in the current study, including children who did not have consistent access

to food, who were homeless, and who required extra educational assistance were especially

suffering during this time of school closures (e.g., Ed Source, 2021; North, 2020). Meanwhile,

Natanson (2021) reported that within various regions, students of color and those who did not

speak English as their first language were receiving significantly worse grades than they received

in a typical year. These consequences caused many schools across the country to open up for

either full or partial in-person instruction during the fall of 2020.

Come the winter, safety guidelines and knowledge surrounding COVID-19 became more

clear, and public health experts learned that holding in-person school did not significantly

contribute to the spread of the virus, as was once thought (Bowie, 2021). Still, some school

districts such as those in suburban Maryland and California, remained closed. This decision was

primarily due to a mixture of politics and the federal and state governments' inability to set clear

COVID-19 safety guidelines earlier on in the pandemic. Valant (2020) also reasoned that

COVID-19 guidelines often became more about politics than about facts and safety. 2020 was an

extremely politically polarizing year. While Republicans during the Trump Era fell to one

extreme and fought against COVID-19 safety measures such as mask-wearing, liberals stood

firm on the opposite end of the spectrum, being almost overly cautious about the pandemic. This

phenomena in turn impacted states' and school districts' decisions to hold in-person versus

online school. In fact, there was a noticeable pattern among school openings versus closures:

whether or not the area was pro- or anti-Trump. All of the families that I was able to interview,

therefore, came from liberal, suburban, and wealthy counties. This political and geographic

factor in turn caused the families in the current study to all be from generally homogeneous

backgrounds. The demographics collected from the current study illustrated that the vast

majority of the sample was White, middle to upper-middle class, and from well-resourced areas.

Interview responses also revealed that each family had ample access to resources to assist them

during the global crisis. Resources families reported having included (but were not limited to)

child-care/assistance from nannies and other caregivers; children having at least one

technological device (children often had access to at least two devices); families being

well-stocked with food/having access to ample food sources; and having at least one employed

parent, an important factor to address as many families suffered from employment loss during

the pandemic (Parker, Minkin, & Bennett, 2020). Participants, primarily parents, were well

aware of the advantages that their backgrounds gave them during the pandemic:

> "I mean, honestly, like, where we live, our lifestyle, they're very fortunate, right? So if anything, what, it's not like, it's not really placing a real difficulty in their life, right? This is a [...] difficulty overall, like worldwide, but for them [...] there's nothing that's [...] a hardship on them. Like, realistically, there's absolutely no hardship on them, except that they have to do more chores." - Parent 27

> "Well, I think that [...] we are a white privileged family. So all of the things about being a white privileged family that mitigates all the risk factors that a lot of her peers are facing, she gets to avoid [...] But I think at a broader level, I don't think all seventh graders are just fine." - Parent 16

The families within the current study all recognized their privilege and how being

financially stable as well as having other intersectional privilege contributed to their stability and

well-being during this time. Confirming these findings, statewide polls taken during the

pandemic described the contrast between the fears and concerns that low-income and

high-income families had in regards to the pandemic, specifically concerning remote school (The

Education Trust, 2021). While low-income families primarily worried about having the

necessary resources to support their families and provide education for their children, upper-class

families' concerns focused more on their children being able to social distance with friends and a

return to normalcy. Furthermore, families who earned less than $50,000 annually reported

experiencing higher stress levels than their wealthier counterparts. Clearly, access to financial

resources was a crucial factor in determining the sense of security and overall PWB of families

during the pandemic.

Feeling financially secure was also presumably a contributor to the participants in the

current study having many of the protective factors that were noted within this Discussion, such

as family connectedness, academic achievement, and meaningful participation. Since the sample

had access to basic resources, families were granted the privilege of relaxing and bonding with

their families and finding ways to see friends as opposed to worrying about financial burdens,

how children would receive their education, or how they would access medical care if family

members were to fall ill. Jenco (2020) described how low-income families or families in which

parents lost jobs during the pandemic struggled with "material hardship." These families

regularly faced food insecurity, concerns over whether they could pay their rent or mortgage, and

challenges with medical care access. Dealing with such major stressors and inequities was

reported to foster psychological distress within many of these families, which could hold

long-term mental health effects. Garfield and Chidambaram (2020) also reported that families

who were greatly financially impacted by the pandemic were worried about being able to provide

for their children's basic needs. Families who faced these prominent stressors, concerns, and

uncertainties most likely did not experience the protective factors that the families within the

current study's sample experienced. Rather than being able to appreciate down time at home with

loved ones and engaging in activities that contributed meaning and purpose to their lives,

under-resourced families may have had to dedicate more energy and time to providing for

themselves and their families, and ensuring that they could stay afloat during the uncertain times

of the coronavirus pandemic. Interviewing families who faced economic hardship during the

pandemic may have yielded different, more psychologically concerning themes than those that

the current research found.

Is Children's Resilience During the Pandemic Temporary?

The second limitation encountered within the current study was having to conduct the

interviews at one specific moment in time, from November of 2020 through January of 2021.

One reason that interviewing during this time may have influenced results could have been due

to the changes children saw and endured since March of 2020 (the beginning of the coronavirus

pandemic in the U.S.) to the late fall of 2020, when these interviews took place. Parents and

children both expressed that their experiences during the pandemic in the fall were more positive

than when the pandemic first started in the spring. They said that there was a major window of

adjustment, but that their families and their communities learned how to manage the situation

they were presented with:

> "And at the beginning [...] in March, they went to virtual school [...] but they
> didn't have full time school, it was just like a half hour every day or something.
> So there was a lot of this, just dead time, and he had nothing to do. So it was a lot
> more video watching. But it's been better this school year, because they have a lot
> more work, they have a lot more face-time with the teacher, with the class, and
> then they also have, you know, work to be doing outside of school. So it's not
> quite as bad as it was at the beginning." - Parent 17

Participants also commented how as time went on, the coronavirus became more

understood, and families began to understand how they could balance safety with normalcy of

seeing people and doing activities:

> "[...] well, in the very beginning, when we first got sent home last spring, I was
> very disappointed because we had just been in school and now we weren't going
> to be in school for the rest of the year. And over the summer, I felt happier
> because we could see our friends at the pool. And we got to socialize a little bit
> more as things got better. But so, with masks on and social distancing [...] This
> fall [...] I'm still pretty happy. And I'm glad [...] that I can do some sports. And

some of my friends do swim with me, so I'll see them for that [...] I don't think I've changed my mood too much. I'm still pretty happy. " - Child 28

"[...] because we've been in different phases of COVID [...] Like when we first started COVID pandemic stuff in March, we locked down completely, and weren't seeing anyone. So there was zero interaction. And then in the summer when I felt like cases were better, and we were a little bit more comfortable and obviously could spend a lot more time outside, we adapted and the kids played with their friends outside." - Parent 30

These child and parent reports comparing their experiences in the beginning of the pandemic to the time that their interviews took place may reveal a key factor influencing children's PWB within the current study. Children may have appeared to be adaptive and resilient during the time of their interviews because of the nearly "return to normalcy" atmosphere they were experiencing in comparison to the strict pandemic restrictions they faced in the spring of 2020. Research on relative happiness has shown that people tend to determine their current happiness levels by comparing them to their happiness levels at other times in their lives. Specifically, Veenhoven (1991) found that people reported feeling happier after experiencing a significantly hard time in their lives, when their happiness levels were notably low. The current research may support these findings in that children in this sample may have reported having adequate PWB because they had recently emerged from what many described as a worse stage of the pandemic than the one they were currently experiencing. Many children reported that the earlier stages of the pandemic, specifically the periods when they were in lockdown, were more stressful, disappointing, and isolating than the late fall and early winter stages of the pandemic. It is likely that children were comparing their current state of PWB to their PWB levels they felt during the significant hardship they recently experienced, as opposed to viewing their PWB more generally, or comparing it to their typical PWB from a normal year.

Relatedly, the children in the study reported that they felt okay with their lives during the pandemic, but that they were not sure if they would be able to handle this situation if it continued indefinitely and that their solutions were only temporarily beneficial. Literature addressed the concept of people being their most adaptable to pandemic circumstances during its middle stages, and less adaptable as time wore on. Badre (2021) described common feelings of exhaustion and frustration from dealing with pandemic restrictions for over a year with a term that the literature identified as "pandemic fatigue." Adapting to pandemic life took extreme amounts of mental energy and control, and the results were exhausting. Many behaviors had to be adjusted, restricted, and self-monitored. Although humans are adaptable, exuding this much mental control and effort for as long as people were asked to do during the pandemic could naturally make these behaviors more difficult to tolerate over time.

Parrish (2021) described how pandemic fatigue can affect children in particular. To children, a year can seem like an eternity. Asking children to give up their normal way of life for over a year is a lot to ask, and children can recognize that. In the modern age of social media, children also are able to see what their peers and even other adults in the world are up to. If children were seeing more and more people returning to their normal lives or not abiding by COVID restrictions in the final stretch of the pandemic, they may not have felt as though their efforts were warranted. While the current study's interviews stopped in January of 2021, COVID-19 restrictions continued throughout the rest of the school year. As these short-term adjustments became more long-term, one may wonder if children lost their energy and ability to cope with all of the changes they had to make to their daily lives, even with protective factors in place.

Furthermore, throughout the current study, the stressors children were dealing with contributed to acute stress, or short-term stress. When stressors in one's life continue for a long period of time, however, it can turn into chronic stress, or long-lasting stress that can impact both mental and physical health (Kandola, 2018). Children reported how they felt fine "managing" their situation and enjoying their new ways of life "for now." As children continued to deal with the daily differences in their lives from a normal year, and continued to have restrictions to seeing friends and being in in-person school (one of the factors that most challenged their well-being throughout the year) it is possible that children's PWB declined. Villano (2021) referred to this phenomena of children hitting their breaking points with the pandemic as the nation approached the year anniversary of these changes as the "pandemic wall." Even with protective factors in place, children may not have been able to withstand long-term life disruption.

Factors That The Current Study Could Have Taken Into Consideration

The current study revealed the nuance and complexity that came with capturing children's lived experiences during the coronavirus pandemic, as the study design had to take a variety of factors into account. While the current study focused on collecting comprehensive data on one major influential force within the year 2020 -- i.e., how COVID-19 isolation restrictions impacted children's lives -- the complexity unearthed during the interviews point to how limited this focus was. The year of 2020 was fraught with numerous momentous events, including heightened interest in the Black Lives Matter movement and protests over police brutality after the death of George Floyd, and the tense 2020 presidential election (Chavez, 2020). Therefore, in choosing to center the study only on the widespread isolation caused by COVID-19, the research overlooked other prominent factors that penetrated the daily lives of children and adults and may

have played significant roles in influencing the PWB of children and their families. Although

themes did not specifically emerge surrounding these other hot button issues of 2020, perhaps

because they were not specifically targeted by the interview questions, a few families seemed to

be more attuned than others to how these factors converged to create an unprecedented year:

> "The country's already pretty divided [...] and when COVID came, it sort of just
> made it all worse. And it sort of took the different divided people and sort of had,
> they all had a perspective on what COVID was. It was a political device, it was
> the government trying to cover something up [...] And it was horrible. Or, you
> know, and then George Floyd and just, COVID split the country apart again, and
> each party had their, you know, selective ideas about it. And then George Floyd
> happened, Black Lives Matter... And the country just kept getting more divided
> [...] just in time for the election. Just... the country's very divided right now. And I
> feel like COVID is a big part of this, as is Black Lives Matter" - Child 6

As Child 6 insightfully alluded to, 2020 was a year of political unrest and racial

reckoning (Chavez, 2020). In choosing to center the study on isolation impacts on children due

to COVID-19, the study may have missed the important implications that these disruptive,

life-changing, and anxiety-provoking issues caused.

In addition the current study's sample would not have been able to capture the necessary

perspectives that would have given insight into those most affected by a year of racial reckoning

and political turbulence. Those most psychologically impacted by the year 2020 were not White

families from wealthy socioeconomic standings, but rather people from other racial backgrounds

and marginalized groups (e.g., Gibbs, 2020; Bunn, 2020; Chavez, 2020). Bunn (2020) quoted

psychiatrist Dr. Jessica Idom in describing how President Donald Trump's anti-Black rhetoric

during his presidency in the year 2020 "created physical tension within Black people's bodies"

and that his "policy decisions had an overall detrimental impact" on the ability for Black,

Indigenous, and People of Color to feel as though the president cared about their well-being.

During a year when racial tensions were particularly high, and when the nation's leader used his

power to perpetuate and exacerbate these issues, it would have been a valuable and arguably

imperative moment in time to capture the perspectives of people of various races, cultural, and

ethnic backgrounds. Although the serious concern that the sample in the current study consisted

of a majority White, privileged sample was addressed as its own limitation, this limitation

becomes exacerbated when one reviews the year 2020 at large and considers the implications

that stemmed from a year of racial reckoning.

Last but not least, the current study only captured the child's experience as they lived

through the coronavirus pandemic. While parent perspectives on their child/children's

experiences were taken into account, the thesis missed gaining insight into arguably an equally

important perspective: parent's own experiences and coping. Research has indicated that parent

stress, behavior, and PWB tends to greatly impact the PWB of their children (e.g., Morin, 2021;

Kobak, Abbott, Zisk & Bounoua, 2017). Children are keen observers of their parents. Parent

behavior can impact child PWB in that parents model behaviors for their children. Similarly,

stress levels and the type of moods that parents display can influence their child/children's stress

levels and PWB. The coronavirus pandemic and attendant economic pressures, national political

strife, and large-scale racial reckoning were significant stressors for adults in 2020 and early

2021, arguably more so than for their children (Jenco, 2020). Adults dealt with material hardship,

job loss, financial insecurity, illness, and numerous other disruptive factors that were reported to

alter their PWB during the year (Halnon, 2021). When adults dealt with these types of stressors

and suffered psychologically, their own negative PWB may have impacted the family

environment and produced negative PWB outcomes within their children.

Again, as the current study only captured a privileged sample of the population who were

not at greatest risk for PWB challenges, the research may not have been able to gather how

significant parent stress contributed to child PWB, even if this had been included in the interview schedule. Halnon (2021) referenced psychologist Phil Fisher's (2021) study on how the unique circumstances of 2020 impacted children and their families, specifically those from Black, Lantinx, single-parent households, low socioeconomic statuses, and those with family members who are disabled. According to Fisher, the financial hardship and inequalities that existed before COVID-19 did not change or shift demographics, but rather grew deeper for those who were suffering in prior years. Fisher claimed that parents who were suffering through hardships during 2020 had even higher levels of stress than in previous years, and this exacerbated anxiety could have had detrimental PWB impacts upon children. Specifically, Fisher said that parents who were struggling with financial hardships, systemic racism, and other issues of inequities most likely suffered greater overall anxiety in their household, and likely passed some of these stressors onto their children. Therefore, the final perspective that the current study should have captured was the parent perspective on their own experiences in order to investigate how parent stress may have impacted the family environment and played a role in the stress and PWB of their children.

Future Research

As discussed under Family Connectedness, future researchers could interview families who did not have as strong a sense of family connectedness as the families within the current study did. This type of comparative research may further confirm the current findings in that high levels of family connectedness typically help protect children during times of social isolation (Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, and Neumark-Sztainer, 2007). Also mentioned briefly throughout the Discussion, this research could benefit from obtaining quantitative measures of child PWB in relation to some of the key factors identified within the current

research. At its core, the current research offered a close, in-depth look into children's lives in order to gain a full picture of individualized experiences during this unique moment of widespread isolation. Through this form of data collection, many key factors were identified as possible predictors of or contributors to child PWB. To further analyze and confirm the significance of these factors, quantitative research should measure these variables individually as they relate to child PWB. While this research would still be observational, these data would support the qualitative statements made in these interviews with statistical evidence, thus making more concrete conclusions. For example, quantifying the correlation or regression between "Knowing One's Class Already" and children's satisfaction in online school could generate clearer insight into the relationship among these variables. In sum, quantitative research could convey a better understanding of the trends that this qualitative research gathered, providing further support for the current study's findings.

Additional future research could account for the current study's limitations, as previously discussed. To account for the lack of a diverse sample, it would be beneficial to compare the PWB and experiences of children from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses as they experienced widespread isolation. Furthermore, future research would also benefit from reviewing not only how the isolation caused by COVID-19 impacted child PWB, but how the year 2020 at large impacted both children and their parents. Halnon (2021) described how families who faced inequity issues based upon race, class, and disability faced some of the greatest hardship brought by the circumstances of 2020. In addition, Compas' (1987) review on childhood stressors and adaptation evidenced cases in which children's low socioeconomic status and dysfunctional family environments influenced their ability to adapt, causing children to be less able to emerge resilient from major life challenges than those who did

not experience these types of risk factors. It is likely that interviewing children and parents from various racial, cultural, ethnic, and economic backgrounds would indicate that families from underrepresented groups were not as able to adapt and experience resilience as was found within my study's sample due to societal inequalities, the racial inequities that were more widely discussed throughout 2020, and the exacerbated financial hardships brought on by COVID-19. Still, previous research has found that children from various backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses can all adapt and emerge resilient from major life events, as was the case in the Great Depression and WWII (Mihm, 2020). Perhaps it will be uncovered that children no matter their background are adaptable and adjust (at least temporarily) to the circumstances that they are presented with. Continuing the discussion on the limitation of not taking into account the parent perspective on their own experience during 2020, future research may find it useful to take this perspective into account in order to see how parent anxiety and PWB influences their child's PWB.

Regarding the limitation of the current study occurring at one specific moment in time, it may be helpful to conduct future research post-pandemic to learn about children's experiences in the latter half of the pandemic. It is possible that children's overall PWB shifted and/or declined as children may have hit the "pandemic wall." Although this research would involve reflective testimony as opposed to commenting on an experience as it was lived, the research may garner completely different results and reveal less optimistic outcomes than the current research held. It could be vital to see if and what changes children felt as they endured the coronavirus pandemic and widespread isolation beyond the winter of 2021.

Ideas for future research also arose from discussion with interviewees. Within the current study, I focused on children ages 9 to 12 as that was a crucial developmental window for these

children in becoming more reliant on their peers than their families. Meanwhile, children of all ages experienced their own unique effects during widespread social isolation (e.g., NYU Langone Health, 2020; Grose, 2020). Future researchers may also benefit from learning how widespread social isolation related to the PWB of children older than ages 9-12. While children in their later childhood years were on the cusp of branching out from family members and placing more emphasis on peer relationships, older children were already used to relying on their friends by the time the pandemic began, and were even more distant from their parents than younger children were (Grose, 2020). Older children may have therefore felt even harder hit by widespread social isolation than younger children as their worlds had already been heavily centered around their friends and social relationships outside of their families. Child 25 expressed her empathy for her older siblings who had to miss out school years that were particularly special and important in terms of social activity:

> "It's definitely really hard. Because obviously, I said I'm not allowed to see a lot of people, which is really difficult. But it's like, even harder for my older brother and my older sister, because she started high school this year, and he's in seventh grade." - Child 25

Child 25 may have observed her older siblings experiencing the burdens of missing years in school that were notably social and that contributed toteenagers' senses of independence. Clinical psychologist Dr. Lisa Damour noted that teenagers "yearn to be with their peers" and "strive for independence" (Damour, 2020). High schoolers in particular had been used to living independently from their families and focusing heavily on their peer relationships for many years. Putting this way of life on hold for a whole year may have been more difficult and may have altered their everyday lives more than younger children who still greatly relied on their parents.

There are also many special occasions and school milestones that older adolescents and teenagers experience in a typical school year. Athletic games, school dances, and graduations are just a few of these events that make meaningful impacts on older children's lives. It would be interesting to see how missing out on some of these long-awaited exciting events and activities may have caused these children to feel disappointed, angry, or moody (NYU Langone Health, 2020). Perhaps after speaking with teenagers about their missed experiences during the pandemic, one would perceive that teenagers felt greater PWB impacts than children in late childhood.

In an opposite realm, one may also wonder how widespread social isolation related to the PWB of younger children. Early learning care programs such as preschools, daycares, and kindergartens, foster important social, emotional, and developmental benefits within young children (Start Early, 2021). Specifically, being around other children and adults foster language development and interpersonal skills that contribute to cognition and social maturity (Start Early, 2021; Bodrova & Leong, 2005). While classrooms and school-settings were closed, however, children had to remain home and isolated from these influential and sociable environments. Perhaps young children who could not attend school for a whole year experienced considerable challenges that impacted their PWB and their development in different ways than it did children in their later childhood years.

It is known, however, that children in their early childhood years are more reliant on their parents than older children are for support, interaction, and play (Erikson, 1950). Furthermore, as parents are some of the most influential people in these children's lives, the way that parents interact with and engage their children can greatly impact their social, emotional, and cognitive development (Panworld Education, 2017). As parents hold a prominent influence over early

child well-being and because children gain necessary social and cognitive skills from their

parents, one may argue that these children received enough attention, support, and interaction

during the pandemic, even while removed from a classroom environment.

On the other hand, many parents reported that during the pandemic, achieving a

work-family balance was more difficult than in a normal year (Igielnik, 2021). Although

telework assisted parents in being able to be home with their children during the day, parents still

reported that balancing work and family was challenging. Meanwhile, correlations were found

between parents who had ample amounts of work flexibility during the pandemic and their

overall well-being, specifically on their depression and stress levels (Kim, Galinsky, & Pal,

2020). Parents who perceived that they had work flexibility and support for a healthy lifestyle

experienced fewer signs of depressive symptoms as well as lower stress levels. As the current

research discussed, parent well-being can influence the family environment, in turn impacting

children's PWB (Neubauer, Schmidt, Kramer, and Schmiedek, 2021). Parents who did not

perceive that they had adequate levels of work flexibility and support, but rather found their

work-life balance challenging or frustrating may have fostered a more stressful home

environment for their young children. Young children being removed from an interactive school

environment partnered with parents having difficulty balancing work life and child-care during

the pandemic might hold negative implications for the well-being and development of young

children. Future researchers may benefit from gaining insight into the experiences of young

children and their families during the pandemic, and how young children in particular felt during

this time.

Yet, it might be difficult to gain thoughtful responses from children at such a young age.

Also, implications to young children might have impacted their development more prominently

than their well-being, as early childhood interactions hold great influence over children's future

development (e.g., Panworld Education, 2017; Bodrova & Leong, 2005). Therefore, it could be

beneficial to conduct future research interviewing parents and young children years after the

pandemic to see how this time period related to their well-being and/or impacted their

development.

Applications

One vital message from the current research was that it is necessary for families to be

aware of the resources and support systems that children can benefit from as they face hardship,

challenges, or major life disruptions. Since beginning my research, a number of resources

emerged that entailed guides and strategies aiming to support child well-being during the

pandemic. These sources were targeted to help families within the context of COVID-19;

however, if the year 2020 has taught us anything, it is that life is unpredictable, and having the

skills to adapt is essential. Some of the resources that provide additional insight and strategies to

help families navigate challenges of similar caliber to that of the COVID-19 pandemic are Queen

and Harding (2020)'s *Societal pandemic burnout: A COVID legacy*; The Child Mind Institute's

(2021) *Supporting Families During COVID-19*; Healthychildren.org's (2020) *Parenting in a*

Pandemic: Tips to Keep the Calm at Home; and the NYU Langone Health's (2020) *How to*

Address Family Conflict & Your Child's Behavioral Problems During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

One resource, *How to Help a Child Who Feels COVID-19 Burnout*, particularly stood out

amongst the research (Graham and Min, 2021). This article enforced a few major strategies that

aligned with much of the above literature, while also including recommendations specific to

helping children who faced long-term stress due to the longevity of the pandemic. The authors

also specified that these strategies applied to both younger and older children. While their

research, again, is pandemic specific, these coping strategies will most likely be applicable to

future hardships, life disruptions, or even, future quarantines. Listed below are Graham and

Min's (2020) strategies for parents to boost their children's mental health during COVID-19,

many of which align with and confirm the current study's findings. The first two recommended

strategies to help children struggling with their mental health during COVID-19 were to help

them "engage in a consistent routine" and to "schedule flexibility into their daily routines."

These two strategies greatly align with the current findings and highlight the importance of

instilling consistency within a child's life while also ensuring they can maintain a sense of

control during a time of frequent uncertainty. Next the authors suggest that parents "keep [their]

child moving." This strategy was seen as crucial to supporting children's mental health, as giving

children opportunities to stay active and take "brain breaks" has positive impacts on mood and

can help manage stress and improve daily focus. The next strategy was to "normalize not always

being OK." In the present study, parents noticed that their children appreciated when they were

empathetic to and understanding of their children's current situations and their feelings. Parent

29 described her opinions on this coping strategy when she said:

> "And I, you know, I've always been super open with the kids, like, I talked to
> them like I'm talking to you. And I've, like, I cry in front of them. Like, I tell them
> my struggles, I tell them when I'm sad, like, so they see that. Like, it's okay to feel
> these things. And it's okay to talk about them. And so I have an extremely open
> relationship with them, [...] I am a safe place to talk to. And I'm trying to figure
> this out, too."

Modeling being open and expressive as well as normalizing disappointment and sadness

validates children's experiences, establishes communication among families, and helps children

process and understand their emotions (Graham and Min, 2020). The next strategy listed was

"learning how to cope together." Coping together can be particularly beneficial for children

struggling with feelings of isolation. Similar to the strategy of normalizing not being okay,

coping together teaches children that it's okay "not to feel happy all the time" and that families can work together to help manage depressive or anxious feelings.

The last strategy listed was "when is this all enough?" This strategy revealed the reality that parents may not always have the resources themselves to help their children cope, or that they may still find their children struggling after implementing all of the recommended strategies. Therefore, Graham and Min's (2021) last piece of advice is that it is okay for parents to ask for help, and that parents should seek out extra resources and support to help their children cope with hardship. Children often have a network of people in their lives who observe them in a variety of settings, and who can offer different perspectives on their lives and interactions than a parent or family member would. Parents can, and should, reach out to children's teachers, school counselors, physicians, or other support systems within their lives as these resources may have insight and advice to offer. There are numerous ways that parents can support their children through hardship. Although children and their families faced challenges during the time of widespread isolation and significant life disruption created by the coronavirus pandemic, many parents and children alike also learned to grow through hardship and how to come out resilient as a family.

Conclusion

The primary takeaway from the current study is its support of prior research that children in their later childhood years greatly benefit from in-person peer interaction, and from the friendships that they form and maintain during this time (e.g., Issawi & Dauphin, 2016; Connell & Wellborne, 1991). Although children within the current study reported having adequate PWB and appeared resilient during the time when interviews took place, it is important to acknowledge children's reports that their lifestyles during the pandemic were not sustainable.

Whether children were more introverted than others, whether they were more familiar with their Zoom classmates than others, or whether they had daily FaceTime conversations with their friends or not, children still conveyed their desires to return to their "normal" lives and to physically be with their friends.

Another prominent takeaway from the current research is its validation of existing research on the important role that family plays in children's PWB during their later childhood years (e.g., Kobak, Abbott, Zisk & Bounoua, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to the current results, family connectedness, parental attunement to their children, and children being given a sense of autonomy from parents all appeared to be vital factors within children's lives during the pandemic, helping them manage social isolation.

Finally, the current results supported prior research that protective factors are a strong determinant of whether or not children can healthfully cope with hardship (e.g., Banyard, Hamby, and Grych, 2017; Constantine, Benard, and Diaz, 1999). The current findings emphasized that the protective factors of meaningful participation, high expectations, and family support are important for parents to take into account when helping their children face life disruptions, take on challenges, and develop resiliency. Throughout the current study, I encountered limitations that prevented comparison of the pandemic experiences of children from various backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. That said, the current study has valuable implications for parents as they teach their children how to grow and emerge resilient through any future instances of widespread social isolation and life disruption.

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Appendix A

Recruiting Form

Hi everyone! I am conducting a study for my senior thesis on how the widespread isolation due to COVID-19 has impacted children and their psychological well-being. For this study, I am seeking to gain the child's perspective on how they feel that widespread isolation and a variety of other related factors have affected their well-being, as well as their parent's perspective on how they feel their child has been impacted by these factors. I am looking for children 9 to 12 years of age who are currently attending a school that has been online only since the Fall of 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. All children are eligible participants for this study **except** those diagnosed with anxiety and/or depression. I will be holding interviews with both the child and parent, with child interviews lasting approximately 15 to 25 minutes and parent interviews lasting approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

If you and your child would like to participate in this study, please fill out this form (attached here) to schedule your interviews. Participants will be entered into a raffle for the chance to win a $25 Panera Bread gift card! You will receive a confirmation email of your interview within a few days of completing the form. Thank you!

Appendix B

Draft Interview Schedule for Parents

1. How much did your child hang out with friends outside of school before the pandemic? How often does your child currently see their friends in person each week? For how long, usually?

   a. Does your child currently see their friends through video chat? How often? Which do you think your child prefers?

2. What activities do you find your child doing most of the week days (when they are not doing online school)? How do you feel about your child's participation in these activities?

3. What activities do you find your child doing most of the weekend day? How do you feel about your child's participation in these activities?

4. How often does your family spend time together, and what activities do you usually do?

   a. Does your child seem to like family time? Why or why not?

   b. How is your child getting along with family members these days (parents or siblings)?

5. With the pandemic can come greater feelings of anxiety. First, I'm curious about how anxious your child tends to be, generally. Do they seem any more anxious now than before the pandemic hit the area? Any less anxious?

6. How does your child usually do in school socially? How do you think they feel now that they don't see their peers in person during the school day? That they don't see their friends in person during the school day?

7. How often is your child on some type of non-school related electronic device? How do you feel about your child's technology usage?

    a. Which devices do they use the most?

    b. Do you put limits on technology within your home?

8. How do you think your child feels about school from home/online school?

9. How does your child do in school academically during a normal year? How do you think they are doing this year?

10. How has your child's daily routine changed and how do you feel about these changes?

    a. How do you think your child's current routines during this isolation period are affecting them psychologically?

    b. Do you think they're doing better during these times than before? Worse?

11. Do you think your child's current lifestyle will impact their development in any ways? Their future in any ways?

Appendix C

Draft Interview Schedule for Children

1. First I am going to ask you about your hobbies and activities since the start of the pandemic and online school. So, once your school day ends, what activities do you usually do?

    a. Are these activities similar to those you did before the pandemic? Different? A little of both? How do you feel about these activities?

2. What activities do you find yourself currently doing most of the weekend days?

    a. Are these activities similar to those you did before the pandemic? Different? A little of both? How do you feel about those activities?

3. Tell me about your relationship with your family since the start of school closures. Generally, have you been getting along with your parent(s)? How about your sibling(s)?

    a. What kinds of things do you all do together since the start of the pandemic? Do you like or dislike these activities and why?

    b. Do you fight with your parent(s)? Siling(s)? What kinds of things do you fight about?

    c. Do you like how much family time you have? Would you rather have more time with friends? Why or why not?

4. What types of electronic devices do you spend most of your free time on and why? (For example, TV, phone, talet, computer, apps)

    a. Do you like how much time you spend on your devices? Do you wish you didn't spend as much time on them?

5. Think back to when you had in-person school. How did you feel about school then? (before schools closed for the coronavirus.) How do you feel about school now?

6. How did you feel about your classmates before schools closed for the coronavirus? How do you feel about your classmates now?

7. How did you feel about friends before schools closed for the coronavirus? How do you feel about your friends now?

8. How do you feel about having to do schoolwork at home, without being in a physical classroom with a teacher?

9. What extracurricular activities did you participate in during last school-year? Are you participating in any of these activities this school-year in alternative ways?

    a. If you had to cancel any of these activities altogether, how has that made you feel that you're not doing them anymore?

10. How would you describe your feelings since the pandemic began? (Is it similar to your feelings before the coronavirus, do you feel more sad than before, do you feel happier than before?)

Appendix D

Parent Verbal Consent

For this research study, I am going to be asking you about your observations and perceptions on your child's experiences during the coronavirus pandemic. Findings from this study will be compared to your child's responses in order to see where answers align and where they disagree. Are you ready to begin?

Appendix E

Parent Debriefing Script

Thank you for participating in this research study. I am conducting this study to gain a greater understanding into what life is like for children 9 to 12 years of age during this unique time of widespread isolation.

While participating in this study, you answered questions about your observations and perceptions of your child's experiences since the start of school-closures and isolation orders due to the coronavirus pandemic. We will use this information to understand more about how your child is feeling during this time, and also to see where your child's reports of their well-being and your perceptions of their well-being align and where they differ.

Do you have any questions?

Appendix F

Child Verbal Assent

My name is Nicki and today I'm going to be interviewing you for a research study. For this research study, I am going to ask you about your experiences since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Would you like to talk with me about this?

Appendix G

Child Debriefing Script

Thank you for participating in this research study. I am conducting this study to get to know more about what your life has been like since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, and how you feel about these changes.

While participating in this study, you answered questions about your experiences since the start of school-closures due to the coronavirus pandemic. We will use this information to understand more about how you are feeling during this time, and also to compare your answers with your parent's.

Do you have any questions?

Appendix H

Parent and Child Debriefing Form

Title of the Study: How Does Widespread Social Isolation Affect the Psychological Well-Being of Children in Their Late Childhood Years?

Researcher Name(s): Nicki Lane (nlane@bates.edu); faculty advisor Prof. Rebecca Fraser-Thill (rfrasert@bates.edu)

Thank you for participating in this research study. We are conducting this study to gain a greater understanding into what life is like for children 9 to 12 years of age during this unique time of widespread isolation, and which factors they feel are having the greatest impacts on their well-being. Our main research question is asking to what extent being isolated from peers and one's levels of family connectedness affects children's well-being during the coronavirus pandemic. The other prominent question we are seeking to uncover is what other factors children feel play a significant role in impacting their well-being throughout this period of widespread isolation, and how these responses compare to their parent's perceptions of their well-being during this time. By hearing from both children themselves as well as their parents, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that children feel most influence their lives, how they feel their well-being is impacted during this time, and how gaining a parent perspective can add additional insight into children's experiences.

While participating in this study, you and your child answered questions about your child's experiences since the start of school-closures and isolation orders due to the coronavirus pandemic. The questions were based on both a scripted interview schedule as well as the topics you and your child started to focus on and discuss more throughout the interview. The two main questions that the interview focused on were how isolation from peers has impacted your child's well-being, and how levels of family connectedness has impacted your child's well-being. We expect to find that children who are greatly isolated from their peers and who have low levels of family connectedness will report having more challenges with well-being during the pandemic than before, and that children who experience minimal levels of peer isolation and high levels of family connectedness will report having positive well-being during the pandemic. Furthermore, we predict that children who experience high levels of isolation from peers but also report high levels of family connectedness will have greater well-being than children who have high levels of isolation and low levels of family connectedness, as strong family connectedness is predicted to be a buffer for children who are isolated from their peers. We hope that the interviews will also bring to light other variables that children commonly feel influence their well-being during widespread isolation. Lastly, we hope to see if obtaining parents' perspectives can add additional insight into their children's experiences.

If you feel that this interview has had or will have any impact on your child's mental health or well-being, or if you feel that the coronavirus pandemic and isolation has had any impacts as well, we recommend the following resources:

https://www.ffcmh.org/covid-19-resources-for-parents

https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/education-awareness/shareable-resources-on-child-and-adolescent-mental-health.shtml
https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/children-and-mental-health/index.shtml?utm_source=NIMHwebsite&utm_medium=Portal&utm_campaign=shareNIMH

https://www.ffcmh.org/covid-19-resources-for-parents

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please feel free to ask us questions in person, or contact us using the email address(es) above. If you would like to learn more about children and isolation, we recommend the following:

Kim, E., Lee, Y.-M., & Riesche, L. (2020). Factors affecting depression in high school students with chronic illness: A nationwide cross-sectional study in South Korea. Archives of Psychiatric Nursing, 34(3), 164–168.
https://doi-org.lprx.bates.edu/10.1016/j.apnu.2020.01.002

Hall-Lande, J. A., Eisenberg, M. E., Christenson, S. L., & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2007). Social isolation, psychological health, and protective factors in adolescence. Adolescence, 42(166), 265–286.

If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the Bates College Institutional Review Board (irb@bates.edu).

Thank you again for participating!

Tables

Table 1
Resilience and Adaptation

Theme	Subtheme	Sub Theme	Sub-Sub Theme
Staying Connected	In-Person	Pods (21%)	
		Social Distancing	Not Ideal (47%)
			Helping to Manage the Situation (47%)
		Extracurricular Activities (34%)	
	Electronically	Video Games (34%)	
		FaceTime & Google Chat (45%)	
Family Support	Family Connectedness	Greater Family Bonding (92%)	
		Having a Sibling (63%)	
		Having a Pet (26%)	
	Parents Giving Children Autonomy (13%)		
	Caveats	Too Much Family Time (37%)	

			Family Not Being a Supplement for Friends (50%)

Online School	Academics	Cons	Schooling virtually/ Technology & Communication Difficulties (63%)
			Not as Engaging or Meaningful as In-Person School (47%)
		Pros	More Freedom in Learning Environment (24%)
		Bettering the Situation	Good Teachers (24%)
	Social Elements	Cons	Losing Friends/ Not Making Friends (29%)
			Not Seeing Close Friends Everyday (29%)
			Not Getting Daily Peer Interaction (37%)
		Pros	Escaping Drama/ Social Awkwardness (11%)
			Introverted Children (4%)

		Bettering the Situation	Knowing the Class Already (18%)
	Children With An IEP/504 Plan	Cons	Accommodations not Translating Well to Virtual Learning (75%)
			Overwhelming/ Difficulties (50%)
		Pros	Freedom in Learning Environment (50%)
	Gratitude For In-Person School (71%)		
Routine	Having Less Structure & Obligations	Appreciation of Slowing Down & Relaxing (45%)	
		Discovering New Hobbies (53%)	
	Staying Occupied/ Instilling Some Type of Routine	Extracurricular Activities (55%)	
		Spending More Time Outside (45%)	
		Online School (34%)	
Anxiety	Covid Anxiety (11%)		

Generalized
Anxiety in Relation
to the Current
Circumstances (16%)

Table 2

Parental Insight Into Children's Experiences and Long-Term Pandemic Impacts

Theme	Subtheme
Parents Being Aware of Their Children's Feelings & Being Receptive to Them	Electronics (56%)
	Needing Space (22%)
	Craving/Missing Normalcy (40%)
	Appreciation of Slowing Down & Relaxing (28%)
	Anxiety (34%)
How Parents Think That the Pandemic Will Affect Children's Development and/or Future	Social Regression (31%)
	Instilling Gratitude (28%)
	Resilience & Adaptation (38%)