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Transformation Zone Schools and School Change Processes: Experiences of Families

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Transformation Zone Schools and School Change Processes: Experiences of Families

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to God as well as my wife, Emily, and our two wonderful daughters, Wilder and Sevilla. Your endless lovingkindess and grace made this possible. Thank you.

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

For many years schools located within concentrated areas of poverty in an urban school county in south Florida have experienced alarmingly high teacher turnover rates and alarmingly low academic performance scores. In 2015, in a lauded exposé printed by the *Tampa Bay Times*, five schools, all of which would go on to become part of the Transformation Zone initiative, were featured in a series of articles, entitled *The Failure Factories* (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015). The purpose of this study was to explore how school policy and process changes enacted from these articles may have affected those students and families.

Historically, the Transformation Zone (TZ) is an initiative by a Florida County School Board to identify and support low performing schools within their district. Most of the schools currently active in the TZ initiative are elementary schools with predominantly African American populations and high rates of students who qualify for free and reduced lunches (PCSB, 2019). While there are studies that describe the operation of these TZ initiatives, particularly in Tennessee with the well documented success of the IZone, there is a gap in the literature about how these powerful reforms are experienced by individual students and families (Glazer et al., 2020; Larbi-Cherif et al., 2022, p. 295).

In this study I focused on family, guardian, and parent interviews in the form of questions utilizing an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) interview and analysis (Smith, et al., 2009). The study was comprised of audio recordings of the interviews with the adult family members. These interviews were transcribed verbatim using an automatic transcription service and attempted to capture and explore the familial experiences of the parents and children

connected to these schools. The collected data were then analyzed for applicable information

following procedures outlined in Smith et al. (2009).

Chapter One: Introduction

Throughout the history and development of American education, changes in our educational programs have occurred, often because of reform movements. As our society's values have shifted, so too have our policies and practices. With each step, change programs were created to best enact these advancements and reforms.

The country's African American population has been affected by these programs (Katznelson, 2005). As American society has sought to move away from systems engendering oppression, misrepresentation, and violence — historically enacted through slavery, Jim Crow laws, and institutionalized racism — our educational systems have become a litmus test for Americans' commitment to equality and advancement. Some believe our schools have failed our communities — we have turned a blind eye to the poor and the disenfranchised (Kozol, 2005). Others go even further, saying we have purposefully failed generations of our citizens for the purpose of further empowering the powerful (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1988).

While there are many studies that describe the impact of different reform processes on schools, studies analyzing the impact of school change processes on the community and how they affect family experiences may also serve to deepen understanding of these efforts.

Throughout this work, I examined different processes of educational change. I investigated how these changes have affected student and family experiences. I focused on the families of students who attended low income, urban, neighborhood schools in a Transformation Zone (TZ) in a Florida school district. I chose this area because many of these schools are

currently undergoing change and because the TZ has undergone extensive overhauls in both leadership and programming for much of the past seven years (PCSB, 2019).

Educational systems are exceptional tools for power. Schools can compensate for the inequalities that shape life in the United States, but quite often the poor may be the community members who are injured the most by these systems. I began my study in a unique time of transition for its education systems - specifically the systems that educate our children in low-income areas, and typically children of minority families. I was interested in examining what role education plays in shaping the lives of the students and families in the surrounding communities. If organized schools play a pivotal role in student academic and social development, it is fair to ask, what are the experiences of students and families in response to these systematic changes to education? To investigate this question, I examined the lives of the members of the community that have lived through these recent processes. Through this study I aimed to communicate the perception and voices of children and families in these neighborhoods.

Background of the Study

The Transformation Zone (TZ) is an initiative affecting public schools identified due to their low academic performance in a Florida school district. These schools have undergone dramatic changes in leadership, methodologies, schedules, and curriculum over the past decade. At the time of the study, there were 13 schools in the TZ, 10 of which were elementary schools (PCSB, 2019). Five of these elementary schools gained national notoriety when the *Tampa Bay Times* produced several articles and additional web content dedicated to their downfall (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015). These articles, entitled "The Failure Factories," highlighted the role the local school board and their policies played in creating and exacerbating the widespread

academic and behavior issues found at these schools. In their Pulitzer Prize winning reporting, Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) wrote:

> On Dec. 18, 2007, the School Board abandoned integration. They justified the vote with bold promises: Schools in poor, Black neighborhoods would get more money, more staff, more resources. They delivered none of that. This is the story of how district leaders turned five once-average schools into Failure Factories.

In response to local pressure, in 2014 the school board created the Scale Up for Success program and the TZ initiative. They also hired an administrator to create, evaluate, and oversee the goals and operations of these programs (PCSB, 2019). Most of these schools were in a South Florida County. These neighborhoods primarily consisted of low income, African American families. Many of the children who attended the TZ schools qualified for free and reduced priced lunch programs. This atmosphere was in stark contrast to other schools located throughout the county, where the school racial and income demographics had more diversity (PCSB, 2019). The School Board was responsible for hiring and training all administrators and educators, overseeing the direction and implementation of curriculum, and managing the school's facilities, personnel and operations. The school district served a densely populated area, diverse in student ethnicity, race, social status, and environment. One of the challenges of the school board was to provide education for students in rural and urban settings spread out over a large county.

Statement of the Problem

Urban elementary schools in the TZ had undergone a decade of high pressure and constant change. School change processes in these communities may have affected numerous familial decisions - including job choices, housing locations, childcare decisions, financial decisions, and parenting decisions. These schools were performing at low levels academically

(PCSB, 2019). Some of these schools were involved in official state processes for examining and improving the success of the school. Often teachers and leaders worked at these schools for one year or less, which lead to families not being acquainted with their child's teacher and the school's administration, creating an additional sense of distance from their schools (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore families' and students' perceptions and understandings of attending a TZ school during the school change process. I conducted qualitative research of the families' experiences while their children attended a TZ elementary school. Specifically, the study utilized an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis interview and analysis (IPA), with questions designed to help the researcher understand how the families viewed the school during the changes and how attending the TZ school affected family members lives.

Research Questions

1. How did the Transformation Zone (TZ) initiative affect the understandings of families whose children attended these schools?

2. How did children and families attending these schools understand these change processes?

Significance of the Study

Studies on families' responses and experiences to educational change programs are underrepresented in the literature. While we know that existing school studies show a relationship between home life and the effects it has on school performance, I believe it is also valuable to study how schools affect home life (Rothstein, 2008).

This study provided families the opportunity to reflect and process their education and how it affected their lives. In our modern technology-driven society, especially in an urban environment, families – parents and children, can become busy with the day-to-day needs of life. These day-to-day activities may not provide them an opportunity to examine their lives at a macro level – to reflect on the past few years of their lives, and how major factors in their lives— their education and schools, are affecting their decision making and quality of life.

Research Design

Using IPA interview techniques, which places an emphasis on allowing the participants to share their experience, the study consisted of two elementary-school TZ families (Smith et al. 2009). For 90 minutes, I interviewed each family at a community location near their neighborhood. I located these families using a network sampling approach – with participants and families directing me to contact other families they knew within their community network.

During the interview process, I asked aloud the adult family members questions I recorded in a research journal and an audio recording device. The conduct of the interviews varied; however, an adult family member was always a participant in the session. Following the interviews, the participants were given an opportunity to review the interview transcripts, and attend a community focus group to discuss the findings. A community celebration night was hosted, where participants and family members had an opportunity to participate in a presentation of the interviews.

Key Terms: Transformation Zone, family experiences, low income, African American, South Florida School District

Assumptions

Throughout this work, I may have had pre-existing assumptions, including the following: families lack effective methods to communicate in an academic capacity, families are affected by school change, and families are reflective about their experiences. Additionally, I assumed that families remained in the TZ neighborhoods and did not relocate after a partial year. These assumptions revealed to me that I could have been approaching this study with a deficit mindset about the capacity of the potential participants. I am aware that the participants have different social and cultural experiences, and I assumed that the IPA method provided a framework to explore our differences. I also recognize the reality that the participants and I have common understandings, specifically the shared experiences of having elementary aged children and living in a TZ neighborhood. I assumed that these understandings would create a foundation for professional relationships.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This review of applicable literature explores the existing foundation of change process research pertaining to student and family experiences in urban elementary schools. By accumulating and delving into these sources and by entering conversations with these unique perspectives, situations and voices, it is my hope that the lessons and questions from the past will inform future research in this field.

To understand today's urban public schools, particularly those going through transformation processes and populated primarily with racial and ethnic minority students, it is necessary to examine the policies and practices that have shaped American educational systems, over the years. Members of racial or ethnic minority groups disproportionately live in poverty (Bennett et al., 2023; NCES, 2019). In the TZ, many schools were designated as high poverty; Title 1 schools in PCSB have an average of 89 % of their students identifying themselves as racial minorities (PCSB, 2019). Accordingly, I believed it was important for this review to first explore literature regarding the history of African American education in the United States. I then presented a review of educational policies created throughout the 21st century. In the sections which follow, I present a brief history of school change processes in Florida, along with an overview of local events influencing school and district policy. Finally, I discuss current issues facing African American students and families enrolled in urban elementary schools.

History of Educational Policy of African Americans

Although the ramifications of the United States' history with slavery and racism have been widely cited as providing the basis upon which much of modern poverty and inequality

continues to spring forth, this review would be incomplete without acknowledging the reality of this history and the consequences of these events for policy makers and the disenfranchised alike (Anderson, 1988; Katznelson, 2005). The foundation for our current climate of racism and discrimination against African Americans resides firmly with the oppression, enslavement, and horrors of slavery and Jim Crow. Throughout, African Americans have maintained a continual resistance to these unequal social structures (Katznelson, 2005). Slavery is a shameful evil act in American history. Our nation's history of economic growth was produced from the sweat and death of owned individuals (Alexander, 2012; Douglass, 2016). Ownership of another person was not only legal, but it was also often justified as having served an obvious economic purpose. And, while a relationship existed between the two groups, one group was always the beneficiary and the other was always repressed for monetary gain (Douglass, 2016).

Historically, it is clear African Americans value education and the education of their children. James Anderson writes in *The Education of Blacks in the South* (1988), the freedom to pursue an education was the most important opportunity the Black slaves were denied. One freed slave was recorded as saying, "There is one sin that slavery committed against me which I will never forgive; it robbed me of my education" (p. 5). Enslaved, individuals would be punished — some even to the point of death — for learning how to read. During this time, for the enslaved, to read was to equate yourself with your owner (Anderson, 1998). Reading was a rebellion, and learning to read was a declaration of equality. Frederick Douglass wrote that what he gained through reading would be of no value to his owner, and that in some ways this transformation would make him unfit to be a slave (Douglass, 2016).

Once freed, the Black community embraced education rapidly and with fervor. Research shows that former slaves eagerly organized and created schools for their children — even when

they only had a few dollars to their name. For many, education was the only gift they could give to their children (Anderson, 1998). However, Black education was almost immediately restrained by large monetary entities. Groups like the General Education Board (GEB), an independent committee comprised of northern philanthropists, sought to turn Black schools and education programs into industrial training centers (Anderson, 1998; Keyes 2022). Through a series of political manipulations and funding pressures, this group, as well as others like it, was successful in reorganizing the direction of Black education.

Across the nation, Black schools were discouraged from providing liberal arts education — math, science, and writing — to their students (Douglass, 2016). Instead, the GEB, and its contemporaries, pressured students into training programs which prepared them for less profitable professions, such as sewing, cooking, and agricultural labor (Anderson 1988). This resulted in a form of rebranded slavery and paved the way for Black children's desire for equal and liberal education to be in constant conflict with the monetary powers of the day.

The New Deal

The New Deal, as an engine for economic rebirth, had a powerful effect on the American class and education system. As noted in Ira Katznelson's (2005) work, *When Affirmative Action was White*, authors of the New Deal sought to make it possible for people from all classes to obtain an education. These changes continued under the G.I. Bill; military veterans were afforded the opportunity to own homes through federal legislative assistance programs, enlist in the social security system and gain many new, social, and economic benefits. These programs gave poorer Americans an opportunity to be promoted out of poverty while also revitalizing the country, as a whole (Katznelson, 2005).

The New Deal proved successful; however, most of the participants receiving benefits from the programs were White (Katznelson, 2005). Accordingly, the gap between the education and affluence of Black and White populations dramatically increased, and, unsurprisingly, this gap in program participation was not coincidental. Black citizens, through institutionalized racism and social persuasion, were systematically excluded from the programs and processes spawned by the New Deal (Gordon, 2005; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992).

Southern political movements were successful at ensuring the creation of loopholes within federal legislation which allowed individual states to manipulate the interpretation and implementation of many of these laws and programs. Southern banks were allowed just enough leeway to deny Black citizens loans. The schools and state systems had the power to reject Black citizens who applied for the rights they had been granted by federal law (Gordon 2005; Sullivan, 2014). These intentional loopholes, which included unfair distribution and practices involving home ownership, the G.I. Bill, and access to labor unions, continued to exist well into the 1970's, and they only began to be absolved during the Affirmative Action movement and during the presidential terms of Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon (Katznelson, 2005).

One of the major issues that arose from this time became what has been termed Dysconscious Racism (King, 2016). Often it is easier for people to continue about their lives, unaware of the systems of thought they are entrenched in – systems that elevate White culture as dominate and devalue African American culture and experiences (King, 2016). Dysconscious Racism, defined by King, is the lack of action and acceptance of White privilege being perpetuated. King continues, "educators and researchers have a moral responsibility to broaden our student's capacity and their will to respond to injustice" (King, 2016, p. 160). For many African Americans, however, these systems have created a heightened appreciation of the unique

strengths of their culture. To be an African American is to be a sojourner in an unjust world. For many, it is to be a person of faith, who works towards a new dawn.

Modern Policies and Their Effects

To explore the conditions of urban elementary schools in Florida, it is first important to understand national educational policies and practices, as well as the social impetuses and pressures surrounding and affecting these practices. Several of these policies have greatly influenced the current generation of students and teachers.

One such policy is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). Designed during Johnson's presidency, this act marked a pivotal moment in our nation's education history and continues to serve as the foundation for many of the policies that have since followed (Paul, 2016). For instance, the ESEA allowed for financial support for students and schools in low-income areas through the Title I designation (Paul, 2016). This act was created to be reauthorized every five years and, over the years, new additions to ESEA, or new acts created from the ESEA framework, have been developed, including Reagan's (1981) Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA), Clinton's (1994) Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), Bush's (2001) No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and Obama's (2015) Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

With each of these variations, additions, and changes to ESEA, legislators sought to achieve specific and unique goals (Hernandez, 2018; Paul, 2016). For instance, it has been argued that Reagan's ECIA attempted to move away from federal regulations and give power back to the states, while Clinton's IASA sought to create new parameters for assessment and shift the focus onto students' achievement (Week, 1994). Teachers and scholars are still exploring the reach and effects of NCLB, which introduced controversial penalization and

compensation schemas using Federal and State examinations (Peterson & West, 2003). The NCLB was implemented for the expressed purpose of lessening the gap between high and low performing student populations. Yet, this legislation has since been credited with creating a harmful environment for at-risk student populations and their teachers (Morgan, 2016).

To meet NCLB standards, teachers in urban schools, and especially those with predominantly African American student populations, felt pressured to focus exclusively on the performance of their students on standardized tests, resulting in scripted classroom protocols (Liou & Rotheram-Fuller, 2019). These protocols then became increasingly necessary as experienced teachers began fleeing urban schools (Kozol, 2005). Some teachers left because they sought to teach curriculum, they found valuable and to work in a system in which there was not as much pressure from the administration. Other teachers left because the pay given to teachers at schools performing well was higher than the pay for teachers at failing schools (Kozol, 2005). Clemmitt (2007) emphasizes this point further, saying, "NCLB doesn't put muscle behind the high-quality teacher requirement and sets unrealistic goals and timetables for school progress" (p. 366).

Local Policies and The Failure Factory Articles

In August 2015, *The Tampa Bay Times* (TBT) wrote a five-article series titled, *The Failure Factories* (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015). *The Failure Factories* articles highlighted the conditions at five elementary schools, arguing that these schools have undergone a significant change in academic performance and safety since 2007.

The Pulitzer Prize winning articles described how the local school board took steps to establish these five schools, later known as the Failure Factory Schools, in a Neighborhood School Model. The initial plan was to cut busing and integration requirements for these schools

while also increasing funding. The authors made claims that these same choices led to the downfall of these predominantly African American and poor schools.

On Dec. 18, 2007, the District School Board abandoned integration. They justified the vote with bold promises: Schools in poor, Black neighborhoods would get more money, more staff, more resources. They delivered none of that. This is the story of how district leaders turned five once-average schools into Failure Factories. (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015)

The Failure Factories relied on data from the school's disciplinary records, police reports and individual interviews (Fitzpatrick et al.,2015). These articles led to a nationwide outcry and increased attention on the District School Board. In response, the county created a program called the Transformation Zone (TZ) for eleven schools in the district. In addition to placement in the TZ, the five schools highlighted in the *TBT* article were also included in an even more intensive program, Scale Up for Success (PCSB, 2018).

Accordingly, Scale Up for Success and the TZ were specifically created to address the issues these articles brought to light. They aimed to do so by creating extended learning hours, improving staff and leadership development and accountability, monitoring behavior practices and incidences, working with community organizations and increasing funding to supplement learning tools (PCSB, 2018).

Florida School Change Policy

At the time of data collection, in the summer of 2021, if a public school in the state of Florida received a school grade of D or F for the year, that school was then subjected to at least one of several possible interventions (Florida Statutes, 2018). These interventions were specifically drafted with the intention of improving student performance and, hence, each institution's school grade:

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The intervention and support strategies must address student performance and may

include improvement planning; leadership quality improvement; educator quality

improvement; professional development; curriculum review, pacing and alignment across

grade levels to improve background knowledge in social studies, science, and the arts;

and the use of continuous improvement and monitoring plans and processes. In addition,

the state board may prescribe reporting requirements to review and monitor the progress

of the schools (Florida Statutes, 2018).

If a school earned two consecutive years of D or F grades, the state stipulated that the

institution would undergo more intensive interventions. If the school spent three years below

grade, the district would then be required to implement a turnaround plan for the school. If the

turnaround plan still failed to positively impact the school grade, the institution might be closed

and reopened as a charter school, or else the students might be removed, dispersed throughout

the county, and monitored, or else another proven turnaround tactic might be utilized (Florida

Statutes, 2018).

From a research-based perspective, there are aspects of this process that are problematic.

The school change process is rarely as simple as improving the yearly school grade. These

schools are also under intense pressure to reconfigure the larger school and community cultures,

build outside relationships and solve underlying conditions — and all in a relatively short period

of time (Leithwood et al, 2010).

Schools undergoing a turnaround plan experience a high level of scrutiny, and they are

frequently required to create lasting changes quickly (Bryk, 2010). However, positive change can

be difficult to enact within these scenarios. The factors initially contributing to the school's poor

performance tend to hail from a wide range of sources, including home environments, staff

development, school resources, community support and administrative leadership styles as well as the history of racism and discrimination discussed in earlier sections of this thesis. Reinforcing each of these structures is then essential to the success of the turnaround plan, and it becomes necessary to establish strong support systems equipped to address each of these contributing areas (Bryk, 2010).

School change processes also create a uniquely difficult setting for those in leadership. The initial reactions of staff, students and families can be unsupportive and defensive, and swift changes may cause some to leave or feel increasingly disconnected from their community (Whitaker, 2010). Accordingly, the success of the plan may very well hinge on the team-building skills and emotional awareness of leaders within the school's administration team (Bryk, 2010). Even outside leadership and partnerships have been shown to play a meaningful role. Schools with strong neighborhood partnerships— specifically those with ties to local religious organizations—tend to perform better during turnaround processes (Bryk, 2010).

Outside groups and the school's administrators are not the only ones tasked with creating an almost instant culture of optimism and renewed sense of identity within these schools. Teachers are heavily relied upon to perform the pivotal function of encouraging their students to see themselves differently and to believe that they are, in fact, capable learners (Hollins, 2006). Perhaps even more difficult, these teachers are also then tasked with the challenge of fully buying into that same conviction, themselves: that their students are capable learners who can successfully perform on standardized tests, and that they are capable teachers who have the power to sway the culture of instruction within their school for the better (Hollins, 2006).

Improvements to the school's overall pedagogy and to each teacher's professional development have also been shown to contribute to various aspects of school success. For

instance, while evaluating an institution which underwent an intervention specifically geared to enhance these two key areas, Bryk (2010), noted that the schools became more successful with an increase in school attendance as the quality of the pedagogy became more student based and engaging.

Regardless of which interventions are chosen and implemented within these schools, turnaround programs, like Scale Up for Success and the TZ, are understandably geared to disrupt the status quo of failing institutions and to create substantial changes within the community. Instigating an increased sense of urgency and pressure to improve the student body's cumulative performance is paramount to the turnaround process, yet many of these same students and families are already subjected to other demanding sources of urgency and pressure (Bryk, 2010).

Current Solutions and Comparisons that Affect the Student Experience

The Classroom Experience

The setting for the urban school student to learn is different for them than other students. A recent trend shows that some urban schools have adopted a style of teaching and classroom environment that emphasizes testing first with less instruction for the arts, physical education, critical thinking, and personal growth and development (Morgan, 2016). The classrooms for these students are organized in a scripted fashion to achieve the best results for testing. These schools approach education with the test as the goal; education is framed to score high on these standard exams. The teachers are instructed to focus on the bubble kids, the children who with a little extra push can move up to the next level, therefore raising the school's grade overall (Thomas & Stevenson, 2009). The academically failing student, the student in most need, will therefore be ignored - as there is less hope or expectations for them. They will live their lives, their education, their view of the world, directed by the state-managed testing evaluations. These

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tests will tell the students if they are worth enough to invest time and money into their lives. This style of education can cause negative self-images for students (Liou & Rotheram-Fuller, 2019). However, for the school's benefit, many of these schools use these scripted lessons and strict time-regimented programs to help solve their teacher retention problem. In the classroom, students of color are also more likely to be targeted for school behavioral issues and more likely to be suspended (Henry et al., 2022).

Students lack the time or skills to process the questions and answers that are imperative for them to mature. "Our schools, then, instead of motivating and encouraging students from poverty and other subcultures, successfully inhibits them" (Chamofsky, 1971, p. 60). These external causes for failure are magnified by the obsession schools have for routines and evaluations, which are designed uniquely for the Middle America school setting. First, schools design an environment that influences the student subtly and coercively (Chamofsky, 1971, p. 56). The student's awareness of their social belonging is guided by their ability to follow the routines of the instructor, thus earning praise and rewards. These rules and routines may not only be completely foreign to academically at-risk students, but they may place no value in the rewards. Secondly, teachers have constructed, through training and social conditioning, systems that constantly monitor and evaluate their students and these systems are reinforced by the actions of school leaders and state inspectors. Academically at-risk students may find themselves in a space where each action and process is consistently scrutinized to unfamiliar standards and unattainable goals (Thomas & Stevenson, 2009).

The Student Factors: a profile

The traditional approaches to examining, managing, and educating at-risk students are faulty from the start. These approaches begin with an attempt to place students, with different

learning skills, and unique living situations, into a frame that is designed for the middle-class

American student and teacher. Chamofsky (1971) further emphasizes this point:

> The traditional mode of motivating people who feel powerless has been to hold out the
>
> carrot, as it were – to hold out the key to the kingdom of middle-classness. The sanctity
>
> of the kingdom is carefully controlled by ensuring that the key is obtained by obeying all
>
> the rules of those who live there... thus the kingdom is kept intact, its members become
>
> homogenized, and the differences between them and those who do not reach for the key
>
> become overpowering. (1971, p. 7)

This traditional view of success is modeled by the equation that behavior reflects grades,

which determines their path, creating status, and equals a level of success. This equation is

surreal for even the most well-adjusted and privileged student. The only difference for the

middle-class student is that they have the skill set and support to decode this false view of life as

they mature. Middle-class students know how to play the game, even if they believe the game is

absurd. While children from stable homes have concrete and consistent structures in their lives,

academically disadvantaged students are unable to visualize futures or understand worldly

systems and concepts derived from this distant fantasy-reality (Walsh, 2008). Success and merit

in children from low socioeconomic communities are organized around a different set of social

structures. Furthermore, most urban school students can understand the task at hand but see

education as more of an 'endurance test', rather than a concept of knowledge (Bartlinger, 1993).

This type of education focuses on managing and monitoring behavior as an indicator of academic

achievement.

Home Conditions

Homelessness can be a factor for the urban school student. As noted by Yankyerah and

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Ofori, "A student's behaviour and attitude in school are thus intricately linked with his/her home environment" (2022, p. 144). To further complicate the homeless problem, often student and family struggles in the home environment goes either unnoticed or underreported. Children and family members might keep their struggles secret—student struggles may be seen as a product of defiance rather than exhaustion, hunger, lack of sleep. The lack of reporting could be considered an act of embarrassment, justified by a culture of pride, disabling the school from receiving possible grant or federal money available to assist schools serving these populations. When examining this factor, Clemmitt (2007) writes that many of the statistics used to examine homelessness do not consider the large number of families and individuals living displaced in relatives and friend's homes in a temporary housing basis. (Clemmitt, 2007, p. 365). These children typically exhibit poor health from their environmental situations and have few social resources. They typically have less exercise and access to dental care. They become sick because the systems of racism and poverty that shape their family's lives hurt their health. In these conditions, the chance of asthma-related symptoms is increased. This causes the student, without treatment, to have little sleep and poor focus. Traditionally, these children come from communities that are lacking public health services, mentoring, or community programs, and availability to mental health counseling. These needs are further illustrated by a report by the United States General Accounting Office (GAO 2000). This report illustrates how support for families should be understood as a critical component to school reform:

> Officials from the initiatives we reviewed said they believe that providing these types of supportive services to the students and their families is as important as their academic programs. They said these services are a critical prerequisite for academic achievement. One high school principal said that he thought the addition of the Family Resource and

Youth Services Centers to Kentucky schools was the single most important step that the

state legislature had taken to improve education. He said that these centers provide

services to students that can remove barriers to learning— such as social and health

problems. In addition, he said that because the program gives students access to

professional staff, such as social workers, he feels less pressure to perform a social work

role and is able to spend more time as the instructional leader of the school. (p.13)

Public health services and community programs provide vital necessary services to help

families. The combination of these factors, combined with constant relocating, causes children to

miss school or change schools frequently. This scenario, therefore, leaves sleep-deprived

children to find a way to survive. They are disadvantaged, in comparison to kids whose families

do not bear the consequences of racism and poverty. As Richard Rothstein (2008) notes in his

article, *Whose Problem is Poverty,*

Poor children are, in general, not read to aloud as often or exposed to complex language

and large vocabularies. Their parents have low-wage jobs and are more frequently laid

off, causing family stress and more arbitrary discipline. The neighborhoods through

which these children walk to school and in which they play have more crime and drugs

and fewer adult role models with professional careers. Such children are more often in

single-parent families and so get less adult attention. (p. 8)

Additionally, the neighborhoods academically children placed at risk live in are often

unsafe. Social marketing, in a variety of mediums, reminds disadvantaged and poor students of

their differences and what the dominant society views as their failings (Chamofsky, 1971;

Kuykendall, 2004). Commercial media in the U. S. does not portray African Americans as

people of faith who live as sojourners in an unjust world.

These are important years for children to discover who they are as people and how they interact in society. These years of development help determine a youth's perception of the world, and their place in it (Wimberly, 2010). This time coined the *watershed decade* is full of risks and challenges. It is this time that life experiences develop the character and perception of the individual. It is at this point that the student is beginning to question the meaning of life (Wimberly, 2010).

In a study by Hsieh et al., (2007), students placed at risk had a view that leads to approaching their work in a manner that is focused heavily on not failing a task, rather than seeking out positive ways to succeed. Students lean towards adopting goals that are performance-avoidance based. Their anxieties may make it difficult for them to try, and as a result, without strong school support and relationships, they may fall behind.

Self-labeling and propagation of negative self-worth is further compounded in women and girls. Houston's (1985) studies on the treatment of female students in the classroom hold much interest. Through her case studies and observations, Houston presents a picture of classrooms that demean girls' education and prevent them from excelling academically. Her research shows a history of curriculum established to cater to the needs of male students and attributes worth to the male style of learning and speech patterns (1985). Houston advocates that teachers adjust their teaching style to create a more gender-positive environment.

Strengths of the African American Community

While there are many challenges for African American students in education today, it is important to not take a stance of deficit or difference research perspectives. These perspectives and research styles continue an idea that African American culture and families are to blame, and incorporating or re-socializing students into more Eurocentric traditions would be beneficial

(Hollins et al., 1994). This can be a dangerous assumption. As King writes, "From this perspective, traditional Black family life, parenting, and cultural patterns are considered deficient, deviant, maladaptive, or pathological" (Hollins et al., 1994, p. 28). This type of flawed thinking can be seen in controversial artifacts like the Moynihan Report (Moynihan, 1965), a report critically analyzed in Susan Greenbaum's work "Blaming the Poor" (2015). Greenbaum, in disagreement with the report, writes that The Moynihan report helped falsely shape American policy and the social narrative that the African American family unit is the single largest factor for their own unemployment, lack of education, and social failures (2015). To illustrate her disagreement further, Greenbaum cites the report's view that "African Americans appear to be doomed to failure by internal flaws in their ethnic social structure" (Greenbaum, 2015, p. 4). This case study is an excellent example of the manipulation of research to continue guidelines, standards, and policies with systematic racist undertones and initiatives. Historically, it has been shown that the systems in place today were intentionally created to oppress and marginalize African Americans educationally, politically, and socially (Anderson, 1988; Katznelson, 2005). Some of the best strengths of the African American is the family unit and it is rich with culture and deep values systems that are too often diminished or devalued (Hill, 2003).

The African American community continues to respond to adversity and challenges with resilience. Within these communities, rich traditions and histories are developed through persecution, oppression, and inequality. In response to the years of slavery, Jim Crow, and the modern era of mass incarceration, African Americans, and their families, have strengthened valuable traits including, "high achievement orientation, strong work orientation, adaptability of family roles, strong kinship bonds, and strong religious orientations" (Hampton et al., 2010, p.

5). These strengths provide these communities with necessary supports to equip them socially, politically, and economically.

As Hill (2003) notes, African American families have stronger kinship roles than traditional White American families. Although both groups will adopt or take in a similar percentage of older or elderly family members, Black families take in a much higher percentage of children under the age of 18 (Hill, 2003). These roles are invaluable in creating a system of flexible support. Due to the nature of these roles, younger family members might take on additional family roles in times of need. This provides the family unit with stronger ties and an increase in skills (Hill, 2003).

The church or religious experience in the African American and Black communities play a pivotal role and is one of the key strengths in the community. The church, for many, provides essential supports physically through food, clothing, and assistance, while also providing care socially and emotionally through a system of shared beliefs and positive self-esteem (Taylor & Chatters, 1988, p. 194). To support this claim of the essential role of faith in these communities, it is reported in a study conducted by Phillips, et al. (2012), married couples listed "Jesus/God" as the primary reason for the success and happiness of their marriage (p. 943). These same families also reported having a perception of a highly happy marriage with both partners rating their marriage happiness at or above 90 percent (p. 945). In addition to their faith, Logan (2018), writes that the modern Black community finds strength in additional key areas including a focus on unity, creativity, collective work, and self-determination. These areas, similar to the traits described by Hampton et al., (2010) paint a picture of communities rooted in communal living, resiliency, and support.

Conclusion

A family and student's experience during a school transformation process in an urban elementary school is affected deeply by historical, social, and political factors (Anderson, 1998; Katznelson, 2005). Leaders of school reform and school change express that there are several key steps necessary to help students succeed during these processes including creating strong community partnerships, increased training in pedagogy, leadership development, creative outreach methods for additional resources, and building relationships (Bryk, 2010). Throughout the years, educational policies have shifted from the 1965 ESEA to new reauthorizations in the 2001 NCLB and the 2015 ESSA to include more assessment standards, penalization processes, and higher statewide and district accountability (Hernandez, 2018). *The Failure Factories* articles presented an opportunity to view the current climate and student experiences in urban elementary schools in one county (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015). The experiences of the students and families are varied and diverse, and this research provided me an opportunity to explore these important stakeholder perspectives.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

One approach to understanding how school change processes in the TZ might impact a community is to analyze family experiences over the past several years. In this study I conducted family interviews about their experiences while attending schools in the TZ in hopes of understanding how the school change processes affected their lives. I hoped these meetings created an opportunity for parents, students, and caregivers to share their unique experiences. These families typically lived in low-income communities and attended schools assigned to the TZ (PCSB, 2019).

To learn about the effects of changes from TZ schools, the interviews were conducted, and the data analyzed based on qualitative Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis interview format (IPA) methods. These sessions were composed of semi-structured interviews with the adult family members. I employed IPA methods, which are useful in studying the participant's experience (Smith, et al., 2009). In the remainder of this chapter, I describe the research questions, research design, community focus groups, inclusion criteria, recruitment, participants, data collections processes, data interpretation strategy, and limitations.

Research Questions

1. How did the Transformation Zone (TZ) initiative affect the understandings of families whose children attended these schools?

2. How did children and families attending these schools understand these change process?

Research Design

      This study used guidelines associated with interpretive phenomenological analysis studies - emphasizing the researcher's understanding of the participant's experience (Smith, et al., 2009). The TZ school's School Improvement Plan (SIP) reports do not contain family experience data. I drew heavily from the interviews collected to understand families' perceptions and experiences during the school changes and how these changes might have affected the students' lives (PCSB, 2019).

      At the core, this approach is focused on understanding the perceived experiences of the families. Unlike other research methods, "...qualitative methods, with their origins in several disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, and linguistics, have a common goal of understanding, rather than measuring, phenomena from the bottom-up'' (Forman et al., 2008, p. 765). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA),

> is concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience. And it aims to conduct this examination in a way which as far as possible enables that experience to be expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems (Smith et al., 2009, p. 32).

Therefore, IPA research is conducted with a focus on the experience, or the phenomenon itself, and seeks to explore and clarify the researcher's interpretation of the experience and the participant's understandings. The origin of IPA is rooted in the work of several major philosophers, including Husserl and Heidegger (Smith et al., 2009). Summarizing Hursserl's philosophy, Smith et al. writes, "the founding principle of phenomenological inquiry is that experience should be examined in the way that it occurs, and in its own terms" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 11). Hursserl's approach (Smith et al. 2009) contributed to IPA research by focusing on

reflective practices on experiences. Heidegger carried on Husserl's work by focusing on how a phenomenon is unique and what criteria makes an experience, specifically, how we interpret our relationships with others. IPA research is a valuable method for exploring the perceived participant experience. These interviews provided an opportunity for the voices of the individual to be expressed while also providing a platform for analyzing intersection points. In this study, through this method, the nuanced interpretations are evident and provide an additional layer of understanding.

IPA as a research method is not unique in its strengths and weaknesses. While there are several valid concerns to the IPA approach, the method is rich with many quality attributes. As noted earlier, perhaps IPA's strength lies in the valuable insights provided by the individuals' interpretation of their experiences. These individual participant samples tend to be homogonous, providing sufficient control for focusing on the individual and the experience. This element is critical to the process – IPA is participant focused. This approach gives value to the participants voice in an unfiltered format. Within this framework, the participant's voice can be shared, and provide exposure to new experiences that a reader might be unfamiliar or uncomfortable with experiencing in their lives. These voices and narratives are full of contextual gems – data points that paint a picture of their experience. At the root of the strength of IPA is the exploration of detailed and deep understandings.

Although a benefit, these detailed understandings are also considerable weaknesses to the IPA method. Data collection, analysis, and interpretation with the IPA processes is demanding of time and resources. Due to these factors, typical samples sizes are smaller and must be analyzed in a repeated pattern. Key decision makers using IPA might find it difficult to utilize the findings and might have had limited exposure to this type of qualitative data. Additionally, due to the

exploratory nature of the process, IPA can have multiple interpretations from the researchers, participants, and readers. This can lead to a range of conclusions and might create a sense that there is a loss of credibility. The interpretative nature of IPA can lack a formalized model or standardization and, in my experience, has resulted in revisiting the analysis for continued reflections. As a researcher, there were times that it was difficult to clearly craft rich IPA style descriptions of the participants and process.

All forms of research methods have some elements of strengths and weakness and IPA, for the purposes of this research, is well suited for the study. The participant's voices, supported with evidence, are invaluable in discovering the understandings and experiences in this vital subject.

Reflexivity Statement

As a member of the community in which this study was conducted, I was acutely aware of some of the similarities and differences I may have had with the participants. In this community it is possible that I can be perceived as a member of the local community, while I may also be recognized as someone outside of the community. These contradictions and interpretations might derive from my economic status, racial identity, and cultural experiences. As someone who identifies as a middle-class White male, I did not have the cultural knowledge and exposure to racism that some of the participants might have experienced. However, as a resident of the same county as the TZ Zone, a parent of two young children and an active member in my faith community, I might have shared some similar threads in life with the parents of the study. Although I currently live in an urban area, as a youth I lived in a rural environment and have had the opportunity to live abroad – witnessing poverty, joy, and resilience in developing countries. Years of exposure in the field of family social work, healthcare, and

education led me to this place of educational research – where I value examining family experiences and their understandings of their experiences.

The primary motivations for this study came from my experiences in the county of this study. As noted earlier, I care about others – their lives, their health, and their dreams. This desire to serve others through my gifts and privileges, is keenly focused on these communities and their educational experiences. Over the years, I have served in my local communities in shelters for people displaced without housing, served in learning environments with impoverished students with challenges, and participated in juvenile incarceration processes and therapies. As a community researcher and advocate for social justice and reform, these interviews are necessary to provide insight into the lives of others affected by negative systemic process and have limited power to affect change. I live in the TZ county, and an area zoned for a TZ school. My children play on the playgrounds with these families, we attend church with these families, and I have spent years teaching some of these students in therapeutic and church settings. I have witnessed these classrooms as a teacher intern supervisor and am acutely aware of the issues facing the TZ families in their schools and at home. This combination of exposure to their homes, churches, and schools is what prompted me to see the connections, the areas affected by change, that might be missed when focused on one single scope of their lives. These relationships and connections, constrained by COVID, were the reason why the two families participated in the study, and the reason I was able to form a diverse and knowledgeable Community Focus Group. As a community researcher, I focus on the values inherit to evaluation, innovation, and storytelling. For the TZ families to create healthy educational and social changes in their lives, they need to be able to have a voice in the academic arena, and I have aimed to provide them with that opportunity.

Community Focus Group (CFG)

In this study, I included a community focus group and interviews. To help bridge the gap between the community and myself, I organized a volunteer community focus group for the study. The CFG were not formal participants, did not have consents, and I did not collect interview data from them. Most of these members were African Americans from the South Florida urban city. This focus group had input into study design and procedures and responded to my initial understanding of the findings. I had two formal meetings, one meeting held prior to the interviews of participants, and the second meeting was after I interviewed the participants and analyzed their interviews. During meeting one, which took place during the spring of 2021, I discussed the study's research design, recruitment strategies, and other procedures after these were approved by USF IRB (see Appendix A). The major purpose of this meeting was pedagogical, I hoped the focus group members would help me learn how to explain my research design and study procedures to community members who may not have great familiarity with social science research.

The second formal meeting took place after the data collection and most of my analysis was complete, but before my dissertation defense in the spring of 2023. This meeting was composed of the original members of the first CFG and one parent from the study. All the study participants were invited to attend the second meeting. At the second meeting, I presented my findings and invited feedback from focus group members.

IPA Sampling Strategies

This research required me to be thoughtful in my sampling strategies. This type of research best utilizes a purposeful sampling approach, specifically a network sampling technique commonly referred to as Snowball Sampling; "Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in

qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources" (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 533). Snowball sampling is useful in research with participants who are similar and know other participants to recommend (Palinkas et al., 2015). IPA research best practices are comprised of homogenous sample studies (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49). Smith et al. writes, "… by making the groups as uniform as possible according to obvious social factors or other theoretical factors relevant to the study, on can then examine in detail psychological variability within the group, by analyzing the pattern of convergence and divergence which arises (Smith et al, 2009, p. 50). In my study, examples of such homogenous groups were a group of children, generally the same age, with similar family demographics. There are a wide array of possibilities, and I was not able to predict in advance the composition of my sample.

Researchers need to be careful with selecting their sample participants, and in IPA research, homogeneity is the key to analyzing and interpreting the data. Additionally, I expected to see variations in the types of relationships of the family members and believed this strengthened my data.

Inclusion Criteria

Participant inclusion criteria consisted of being an adult family member having children who attended a TZ elementary school. Study participants would need to agree to wear a mask during the interview, maintain a safe distance of six feet apart, and be able to answer a series of IPA style interview questions for 90 minutes. There were no criteria based on living location, economic status, race, or any other demographic information.

With the network sampling approach, there were over 20 families directly contacted. Most of these families did not qualify for the study due to their children not attending a TZ

school, although they attended a school in the school district in an area near the TZ schools. I discussed this participation criteria with families that exhibited interest and reviewed all information prior to the interviews including an invite letter, IRB approval, and consent forms. To be included in the study, all adult participants needed to sign the consents. No children were included in the study.

Recruitment Strategies

Starting in the Spring of 2021, I began recruitment for families to interview for the study. Prior to the recruitment process I set up an information website with the IRB approval documentation, details of the study, photographs of myself, and contact information. I also created print materials including business contact cards, flyers, and copies of the invite letter to use for door-to-door visits and in person conversations at events (see Appendix B). Early in the research design, I decided not to contact the school district or TZ schools directly for recruitment of family participants. This decision was intended to help avoid any additional unforeseen barriers that might have affected the progress of the study.

Throughout the process it was difficult to find families to interview. I believe the COVID pandemic played a significant role. Prior to the pandemic, before and during the IRB approval, several potential families had verbally committed to participate during the interview phase. These potential participants came from two nonprofit programs associated with a local church. Previous to IRB and this study and in the first nonprofit, I served families in a child based therapeutic environment at a local church and had a prior relationship with several parents involved with this program whose children attended a TZ school. In the second nonprofit program at the local church, I served with a group that provided meals for TZ families and teacher support in the schools. After the IRB approval, and during the summer of 2021, from

these connections, one family committed to be interviewed. For this study all names and family names are pseudonyms. In this first family, Ada's family, the mother was interviewed, and provided me with list of over ten names of other possible parents to interview. From Ada's network, I was able to connect with one more mother, Tasha, who agreed to be interviewed. Tasha, like Ada, provided me with a list of contacts, none of which either agreed to be interviewed or met the selection criteria of attending a TZ elementary school.

During the time of recruitment, the effects of COVID on these programs and on the relationships in the community were devastating and significant. Both programs, like many others in the area, stopped operating completely due to the restrictions of COVID, the changes to the schools, the response of the local church, and the lack of volunteers and funding. The families from these programs were unable to continue participating as they had a variety of COVID related life challenges including that they had children grown to an age that disqualified them from the study, parents lost jobs and communication with the families were inconsistent and failed. Due to the extreme emotional, economic, social, and political experiences these families were encountering during this time, the families either chose not to participant or were unable to participate due to the inclusion criteria after the IRB approval.

Additionally, several of the community programs that were intended to serve as a potential pool of applicants suffered from COVID related challenges causing them to adjust their programs, pausing programs and services, and in some cases shut down completely. During this time, I had contacted these organizations for recruitment through phone calls, in person appointments, email communications and social media. These organizations included the local YMCAs, Boy's and Girl's Clubs, community parks and recreations, local churches, and community education foundations. Each of these programs experienced significant and various

challenges during the COVID recruitment period, and many of their responses affected a network of resources and tangentially related programs – including housing, food assistance, financial assistance, educational support, therapeutic services, and countless others. Many of the community groups, including the social foundations and local churches, had dramatic shifts in operations. While most churches in this area initially suspended operations, some were able to resume basic worship services online. There was a wide disparity of resources at this time, and this affected how churches and other organizations were able to respond. Several of the local churches I visited in person had temporarily stopped offering any services for up to a year and ceased all ministries. Other church groups were starting to regroup but were uncomfortable with an outside community member contacting their families. All the churches I visited had their family and children's ministries impacted. They were unable to connect me with any families and at times kept physical barriers, including walls and doors between us, out of concern for physical health. All the social organizations I contacted online, over the phone, and in person were unable to connect me to any families due to similar COVID related experiences.

I contacted key stakeholders in the community during this time using personal contacts and social media tools. These community members were actively involved in these communities, and some served on the community focus group. These stakeholders were unable to provide me with any families for the study. I believe that these community members were also experiencing the effects of COVID on their own organizations and were in a process of evaluation and rebuilding.

To find families that attended these schools, I walked neighborhoods door to door with the invite letter and contact information. The neighborhoods I visited were in the school zones for which many of these families should be attending. While I believe that many of these

families most likely had children attending the TZ schools, most were unwilling to communicate with me. I did not receive any new participating families from this approach. Most families would not respond to my attempts to communicate at their door and the few that did were noticeably uncomfortable and protective of their children. Several children were called in from their yards they were playing in and they did not respond at the door, while others kept a yard's distance with masks on, to kindly inform me that they were not interested. I took as many steps as possible to not approach or impose on any family for their own safety and comfort. I had one family from these visits that did speak openly to me, and was interested in participating; however, her child did not attend a TZ school. She did not know of any children who attended in her personal circle of contacts. Her child attended a local charter school. I obtained approval to set up a temporary information table area at a local city recreation facility and park in a TZ school neighborhood. This event did not yield any participant or requests for contact. The pandemic imposed a serious challenge to the nature of IPA interview style research.

The Purposeful Sampling technique with the interviewed families, referred to as Snowball Sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015), did not provide me with as many additional families I hoped it would produce. Although the interviewed families provided me with possible participant contacts, these contacts often did not fulfil the study criteria of attending a TZ elementary school. After contacting more than twenty families associated with the two participating families, I was unable to find any additional families from these networking sources. Most of the families did not attend the TZ schools. Most of these students went to magnet schools, charter schools, or private schools that are not TZ schools. There were several families from this network approach that I do not know if they qualified for the study – they were

hesitant to communicate with me and would inform me through text messages or social media messaging that they were not interested in participating.

The reasons for why these families did not participate is unclear; however, I believe this could be from some of the experiences surrounding COVID, apprehension to participating in a research study, or general disinterest. The lack of interest or inability to locate more families after connecting with the two interviewed families from their network, was an unexpected and curious phenomenon. I had also believed and hoped that the interviewed families would provide useful contacts from their own schools and classrooms. However, I discovered that most of the families did not have relationships or connections with other families at their own schools.

Participants

The communities and neighborhoods affected by the TZ are in an urban city in South Florida. The TZ itself, however, was a label placed upon schools in need of support to improve their state school grade and achievement scores. There are district schools that are not labeled in the TZ. Many of the TZ schools had a high percentage of minority students and were in communities with lower economic status (PCSB, 2018). The schools in the TZ had low scores on state achievement tests and often had a school grade at C or below (PCSB, 2019). The participants of the study included the students and families living in and around the TZ schools.

During the summer and fall of 2021, I collected participant information from an initial pool of several local families and interviewed two families. The adult members of the families I interviewed identified as the mothers of the families. There were four children total between the two families and the children recently attended two different elementary schools. Both schools the children attended were part of the TZ initiative. All the participants identified as African

American and Black. Although the children were not participants in the study, they were the subject of the discussions and interview content.

To create anonymous names with less bias, I utilized an anonymous name generator website with their identified gender as the only variable. I believe this approach helped with clarity when reviewing the results. For the purposes of the study, the two participants anonymous pseudonyms are: Ada and Tasha. Ada has one son (He), Tasha has one boy, referred to by grade, (fifth grader) and two daughters (second grader, seventh grader)

The first family I interviewed, Ada's family, came from one of the original potential families from the local church I was serving in at the time. This interview took place in June, 2021. I was a children's teacher in a therapeutic program at a local church and had previously taught children from this family. The therapeutic program had stopped operating due to COVID, but I was able to contact the mother of the family from a personal connection. Ada identified as the mother of the family, and she did reference any other adult coparents. She had two children, but only one child – her son, met the criteria of recently attending a TZ elementary school.

After Ada's interview, she was able to provide me with the contact information for several more families. Tasha's family, the second interview, came from Ada's connection. This interview took place in July, 2021. Tasha identified as the mother of the family and was a coparent with her husband. The husband was not interviewed. Tasha had three children in the study, and although she had grown up attending these schools in this county, her family had recently returned from living abroad where Tasha was a teacher. I believe that Tasha's motivation to participant was her desire to participant in processes that could improve her school and community. In her interview, it was clear that Tasha valued quality and equitable education as a social imperative.

Data Collection

Setting

 The data collection process took place in a variety of locations. I provided several options for the participants to be interviewed including their homes, community locations, and places of worship. The participants were invited to schedule and use the available conference rooms located at the local Church, reserve rooms at the public and university libraries, and at local civic organizations. These meeting spaces were able to accommodate a variety of family types. Due to the nature of the interviews, the meeting rooms had facilities appropriate for children if they attended with their parent and privacy. Although the parent and caregivers were the participant in the study, it was important to provide a safe space if they brought children with them.

Recording

 The data were recorded in a variety of methods including a data voice recorder, a phone using Otter AI transcription services, and a personal research journal note. At the beginning of each interview, the adult participants signed consent forms, and provided with copies of the study proposal. Only the adult mothers took part in the interviews (see Appendix C).

Data Storage

 Following the interviews, the voice data were downloaded to a secure cloud system, and the informed consent forms were scanned and uploaded to the cloud. The physical copies of the forms were locked in a safe. I emailed each participant a copy of the transcript from their interview for review and feedback about the accuracy of the transcript. After receiving confirmation from the participants about the transcription accuracy, I began data analysis.

Interview Schedule

During the interview process, I introduced the study, explained the format for the interviews, my data collection and analysis process, and any possible uses of the study results. I asked participants if they had questions about the study as I explained the process. Parents were welcome to participate or choose another adult family member in their stead. The interview schedule consisted of a semi-structured format, leaving me room to ask additional prompts to questions as the participant responded, while also keeping a framework (Table 1). These interviews generally lasted 90 minutes and were held in outdoor park locations. In the analysis section, I discuss the conduct of the interviews, given the way that experience oriented me to the data. The final product and responses were used without identifying information.

Table 1

Interview Questions

Research Questions and Prompts	Adult Interview Question and Probes
1 What is the participant's understanding of their relationship to the student and the students' experience learning at home?	1a. What is your relationship to your child? 1b. Tell me a story about what you really like about your child. 1c. Tell me a story about a lesson you taught your child? This might be a school lesson or a moral lesson or a religion or family lesson. 1d. Tell a story about helping your kid succeed in school? 1e. What do you do to help them grow as a person?
Prompts for section 1	• Homework? Independent reading? • After school programs? • Sunday school? • Family History? • Sports? • Jobs? • TV/Video games?

Table 1

(Continued)

2 What are the families' understanding of the school setting?	2a. What school does your child attend? 2b. How long has your child attended the school? 2c. Please tell us a story or set of stories about your child's school. 2d. Please tell a story or set of stories about your child's teachers. 2e. Tell me a story about something your child enjoyed learning.
Prompts for section 2	• Prompt for logistical details of any moves and transfers, but avoid probing for sensitive family information. If such stories are offered, listen, but do not ask respondent to expand. • Ask them to "tell me more" about mentioned school change processes such as ○ Principals ○ Teachers ○ Teachers' aides ○ Testing ○ Reading/writing/mathematics interventions ○ Special education services ○ Tutoring ○ Reading programs ○ Math programs ○ Extended learning ○ Mentoring programs ○ The Pandemic and its Influence • Will not bring up unless prompted. Decide during the interview whether to expand on that content in this section or to flag it and come back later.
3 How does the family understand the Transformation Zone (TZ) initiative?	3a. Tell me a story that helps me understand how you feel about the school overall. 3b. Tell me a set of stories that might help me understand the last few years of your child's education experience. 3c. Tell me a story about changes in the school environment you have seen over the past few years? *Ask the next questions as forced prompts* 3d. What are positive areas that you have seen in your home and community due to these school changes?

Table 1

(Continued)

Prompts for section 3	3e. What are negative areas you have seen in your homelife and community due to these changes? 3f. Did you know that your school is part of the TZ initiative? 3g. How do you feel about your school being labeled a transformation zone school? Possible "Tell me more": • Principals • Teachers • Teachers' aides • Testing • Reading/writing/mathematics interventions • Special education services • Tutoring • Reading programs • Math programs • Extended learning • Mentoring programs • The Pandemic and its Influence Will not bring up unless prompted. Check to see if any of these were flagged in previous sections
4 How do the school's change processes affect the children who attended these schools?	4a. Tell me a story about how your child has excelled at school? 4b. Tell me a story about how your child is challenged at school - why? 4c. Tell me a story about how those experiences affected your child? 4d. Please tell me a story about your experiences with the state testing.
Prompts for section 4	Possible "Tell me more": • Principals • Teachers • Teachers' aides • Testing • Reading/writing/mathematics interventions • Special education services • Tutoring

Table 1

(Continued)

	- Reading programs - Math programs - Extended learning - Mentoring programs - The Pandemic and its Influence Check for information shared previously.
Wrap up	Do you have any questions about the interview process? Any final comments? Thank you

Data Analysis

There are typical processes involved with IPA research including methods for reviewing transcripts, coding and mapping themes, and writing and reviewing extensive memos detailing the experiences of the participants and the researcher (Smith et al., 2009). On the one hand, these processes are common in qualitative research, (e. g. Vanover et al., 2022), however, IPA specifies researchers' conduct during this phase and my analysis was based off the normative practices associated with IPA research. I used guides and practices from Smith et al. (2009), that focus on analyzing the experiences of the family members, as well as the interview processes itself. I analyzed data by reviewing the transcribed tapes, journal notes, drawings, and interview notes. A blank data response chart was used to distinguish any reoccurring or unique themes presented. Interviews were transcribed using Otter Voice services. Analyzing IPA data allows for the representation of the participants and the interviewers interpretation (Smith et al., 2009).

The IPA method focuses on exploring the experiences and understandings of the participants (Smith et al., 2009). As a researcher, this required spending significant time in the original transcripts. Initially I began my analysis with a thorough re-reading of the original transcripts and my notes from the interviews. I confirmed the transcriptions were accurate by listening to the audio recording of the transcripts while reading them at the same time, and carefully anonymized the data. It was important both to anonymize the names of teachers, principals, and other students, and to have a consistent set of pseudonyms across the interviews. I then took the transcriptions and inserted them into a working table. Using this working table, I read through the transcripts and applied exploratory comments (Table 2). This table is adapted from Smith et al., (2009, p. 85).

Table 2

Initial Exploratory Comments

Initial Comments		
Line Number	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments

I then created a set of memos that recorded my initial impressions and then developed a working table (p. 85-87) and memo for each interview. All data were described and discussed in the first section from the data analysis in Chapter 4, which focuses on the participants as individuals.

Next, I labeled in the chart emergent themes from the notes and transcriptions (Table 3). This strategy is shown in Box 5.2 of Smith et al. IPA (Smith et al., 2009, p. 93). I wrote two sets of memos. In one set of memos, I discussed connections and contrasts between the families'

stories. In another, I created a fast and rough memo about what I learned about my research questions and what I needed to know as I continued the analysis. These data were discussed in the second section of my data analysis. This section focuses on connections and contrasts, rather than individuals.

Table 3

Emergent Themes

Developing Emergent Themes		
Original Transcripts	Exploratory comments	Emergent themes

For the third phase of my analysis, I went over the transcripts, my comments, and my memos and began mapping the themes, and with the use of a theme-based chart, grouped the themes into similar clusters of data (Table 4). I created a set of themes for each participant based on Box 5.5 (Smith et al., 2009, p. 100).

Table 4

Theme Clusters

Table of Theme Clusters		
Themes	Page/line	Key Words

I developed a master theme chart like Box 5.6 (Smith et al., 2009, p. 101), and

wrote memos where I discussed each of the major themes (Table 5). This theming process

allowed for me to explore any themes that are reoccurring, prominent, or polarizing (Smith et al.,

2009 p. 91). These data were discussed in the third section of my data analysis. I used these data

to discuss the major themes related to families' experience of school change in the TZ.

Table 5

Master Themes

Master Table of Themes	
Theme	Lines

In the conclusion, I created interpretive summaries that briefly and concisely used the full

range of data I collected to answer my research questions. Following the interviews, I provided

the family members with a transcript of their interview for their review to ensure accuracy. This

opportunity provided the participants an opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings or errors.

As I discussed, I met with the study's community focus group for a second meeting after I

completed major data collection and analysis to share and discuss the study's findings—families

were invited to this meeting. This presentation provided participants with another moment to

examine their interviews and verify the researcher's interpretation. After the dissertation

defense, the researcher hosted a community celebration and presentation of results at a local

church.

Community Focus Group (CFG)

Two Community Focus Groups (CFG) were held to help guide me in the study. The first

of the two meetings were held before the interviews took place in the spring of 2021. The second

CFG meeting took place in the spring of 2023, after the interviews and after I had completed the analysis. Both CFG meetings had the same five core members invited.

The first CFG was composed of five members of the community affected by the TZ and familiar with their local education policies and practices and were diverse in a wide range of age, social economics, and race. Several of the CFG members were directly involved in the schools as mentors, volunteers, and retired staff. Other CFG members were younger Black local residents starting families in the TZ neighborhoods. The CFG provided support and guidance in a video call setting that lasted nearly 90 minutes. This first meeting took place in the spring of 2021. This first CFG meeting's primary discussions revolved around the proposed interview question schedule. The input at this phase was beneficial in shaping the questions to include nuanced and culturally aware elements. The major themes of the first meeting focused on quality of the questions, the role of IPA, and the safety of the participants. The CFG members in this first meeting expressed enthusiasm for the study. I perceived they were interested in having an opportunity for parents to be able to share how their communities are affected by school change processes. The CFG members were encouraging in their responses and offered to help find families for the study.

The second CFG meeting took place in the spring of 2023, on a zoom video conference call and after the analysis was complete. The second meeting consisted of the same five invited CFG members from the first meeting in 2021 with the addition of the mother from one of the family interviews to allow them an opportunity to review the analysis and offer input. This second meeting focused on the methodology and analysis of the study. The analysis CFG description, below in Chapter 4, goes into further detail about the context and reflections.

Summary

Over the past decade an urban school district in Florida has undergone dramatic changes. These changes, originating from plans to decrease busing county wide, has had effects on their communities (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015). The lowest performing schools, primarily elementary schools, have been organized into an initiative called the Transformation Zone (PCSB, 2019). This study was intended to explore the life experiences of families associated with the TZ schools. Through a series of IPA structured interviews, and a detailed analysis, I sought to understand the experiences of the families. The IPA interview process provided a unique method to understanding the insight and phenomenon experienced by these families. This study explored a specific school change phenomenon that is personal and sensitive to the participant. IPA research provides a powerful outlet for the participant to voice their understanding of their experience without interference or interruption.

The recruitment for families during the summer of 2021 consisted of an multiple efforts different approaches. I utilized online resources including web development and social media contacts, print materials, and in person events. Due to COVID, most of these methods were not effective. I found this part of the study to be exhausting and disheartening. The network approach from personal connections made in social and church organizations provided me with over 20 families. Two of these families agreed to the interviews and fit the criteria for selection. Both interviews in practice and throughout the analysis were powerful emotional experiences. Each interview participant had unique insight and perspective although demographically the participants were similar. As a community researcher, I was moved by the depth and thoughtfulness of their responses. As seen in the following analysis and discussion, these mothers were concerned for their families, their education, and their development.

Chapter 4: Analysis

Overview and Background

The Transformation Zone initiative (TZ) is a school change process in a south Florida county led by a school district. The program is wide in scope, encompasses a multitude of lower achieving schools in the district and places additional requirements on these schools compared to schools not in the program. As stated earlier, the TZ, is an initiative unique to a school district in an urban and diverse south Florida county. The TZ is not a physical boundary, it is a support program designed to target and improve school performance for low performing K-12 public schools. The schools that encompass the program are given additional requirements and assessments than other schools in the county and have a higher percentage of students who identify as African American. These schools have a higher number of students that qualify for free and reduced lunch. The participants for this study all come from elementary schools in the TZ. This study focused on families' experiences while attending these schools. Specifically, this study focused on how being a part of a TZ school might have influenced or impacted their community or lives.

Part 1: Participants as Individuals

The first steps of the analysis began with the first Community Focus Group and carried into the interviews. The meeting with the CFG gave me an opportunity to explore reflectively on the families and the upcoming interviews. The first CFG meeting, prior to the interviews gave me a sense of encouragement and excitement. This meeting was in the spring of 2021, and it was a time with political, social, and health related challenges. In the county of this study,

participants were still required to wear masks in all public locations. Children had not yet returned to schools in any sort of historically normal sense. There was a variety of community resources and services slowly reopening and was the beginning of vaccinations. This was the social tone in which the interviews took place locally. These factors influenced the environment and the methods of the study. As a parent, I was exhausted from juggling the demands of work and childcare. I was always aware of each person I interacted with in my environment and how close they were to me due to COVID. It had become second nature socially.

The mothers that took part in the study were given a variety of locations and accommodations for the interviews. Each participant chose to meet at a different local playground. The mothers had the option to meet in an air-conditioned public setting or local churches they attended. However, in the heat of a Florida summer they chose to meet outside. As a parent, I can understand that my children would be with me during this time, and that a playground is a much more suitable location to meet so that a child would not interrupt the interview or would provide a better experience for the family. The first interview took place at a park near the participants home in June of 2021. The second interview took place in July of the same year, one month apart. These interviews shared some similarities, including the outdoor meeting and the inclusion of their children.

The two interviews had similar rhythms. I noticed that the participant responses changed throughout the course of the interviews. The responses seemed to become more thoughtful and less guarded. I had assumed that the parents might give answers that were not full of description due to privacy concerns, but I was surprised at how much detail and insight they shared about their families, their values, their emotions, and their concerns.

There are times when parents are careful when speaking about their children, especially in an interview setting, and it felt as if they had dropped their parental guard down just enough to see the real love, concerns, and hopes that they had for their children. While the summer of 2021 was a time of COVID where families were careful and perhaps distrustful outside their family unit – it was also a time of raw emotions. The interviews had strong moments of raw emotions. These emotions felt as if they were spilling over from their secluded home life and the pressures put on them socially and educationally. Parents during this time felt intense pressure from schools, friends, media, and others on how to raise their children. Responses to these pressure points spilled out during the interviews, and sometimes felt as if it was a therapeutic environment for them. Due to the semi structured style of the questions, the interviews seemed to provide a safe space for the mothers to reflect and respond to their daily experiences.

As a researcher, I tried to set this tone before the start of the interview while arranging the logistics of the meeting. I attempted to convey a sense of thankfulness and professionalism and offered a lengthy extended time prior to the interview questions to review the consents thoroughly. I would formally explain the use of my audio recorder and the Otter transcription process. They were both expecting these tools to be used in the interview. These pre-interview moments took between 15 to 20 minutes, and I purposefully moved slowly through this process. It was my desire that the participants fully understand the consents, but to also present a feeling of not being rushed and revealing to them in advance that I wanted to be a researcher that found value and practiced listening. This was a small attempt to start the process of creating a safe interviewing space to hopefully allow the participant time to provide richer details.

Throughout the interviews, the mothers did not rush in their responses. In both interviews there were key moments where they would be visually excited, and their tone would

shift to speaking louder and quicker. Throughout the later questions in the interviews, I found the mother's comments thoughtful, full of insight and pausing. They appeared as if they wanted to be selective in their word choice. As a parent, I related to a strange phenomenon where you are the expert on your child but can also feel as if you are still discovering new traits and having new revelations daily.

The second interview was 15 minutes longer than the first interview and over 90 minutes in total length. In both interviews, I found myself reassuring them when we were near the end of the interview questions. I felt a mixed sense of emotions towards the end interviews from the mothers. I felt as if the parents were emotionally drained from the reflective questions, but also excited. Their excitement appeared to originate from the hope they had for their interview questions perhaps being used to improve the quality of their children's lives and their educational experiences.

The following steps of analysis consisted of re-reading and listening to the original transcripts thoroughly and creating exploratory comments from the readings and the research journal interview notes. As discussed previously, it is important to note the nature of IPA results are different in style and substance from a typical quantitative study. Smith et. al (2009) give further insight into the IPA process as it is:

> designed to encourage a reflective engagement with the participant's account. Inevitably, the analysis is a joint product of the participant and the analyst. Although the primary concern of the IPA is the lived experience of the participant and the meaning the participant makes of that lived experience, the result is always an account of how the analyst thinks the participant is thinking – this is the double hermeneutic... Thus, the truth claims of an IPA analysis are always tentative and the analysis is subjective. At the same

time the subjectivity is dialogical, systematic, and rigorous in its application and the

results of it are available for the reader to check subsequently. (p. 80)

While re-reading the interview transcripts I anonymized the names of the participants. I

then took the transcriptions and inserted them into a working table. Table 6 (below) was the

primary tool to record the exploratory comments from the transcripts and journal notes. I added

in line numbers to reference a specific line further in the analysis. This table is based on Box 5.1

of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al., 2009, p. 85). This process was

repeated for every transcript.

Table 6

Initial Exploratory Comments During Analysis

Initial Comments		
Line number	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments

Prior to writing the exploratory comments, I listened to the audio and re-read the

transcripts, adding to the journal notes and creating a set of memos. This first pass was necessary

to correct any errors from the automatic transcription. The audio from the recordings added areas

to my notes including the tone of the participants voice, the syntax, and the emphasis and rhythm

they may have used to strengthen key words. Otter Ai. Software is designed for English

transcriptions with added support for regional dialects. I was able to play the audio recording,

while reading the transcriptions to compare any inaccuracies in the transcript. There were areas

where the participants had significant pauses and subtle cues. Throughout this process, I chose to

leave the participants quoted extracts as close as possible to the original for accuracy. The only

changes made were to help the reader with contextual clarifications. I believe this helps the

reader to have insight into the speaker's cultural tones and traits unique to the individual. I believe this is important to providing transparency to the work. While writing the exploratory comments, there were several types of comments created based off the work of Smith et al., including: descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual (2009, p. 84).

Part 2: Connections and Contrasts

After creating Table 2 and writing the exploratory comments after several reviews of the transcript, I began the process of coding and examining themes. This strategy is shown in Box 5.2 of Smith et al. IPA (Smith et al., 2009, p. 93), and can be seen in Table 7 (below). I also wrote two sets of memos. In one set of memos, I discussed connections and contrasts between the families' stories. In another, I created fast and rough memo about what I have learned about my research questions and what I needed to know as I continued the analysis. This section focuses on connections and contrasts, rather than individuals.

While reviewing the transcripts from the interviews I found a variety of connections and differences between the stories they shared and their lived experiences. I looked at key words, quotes, and phrases in the exploratory comments to further explore areas of similar cultural significance for contextualization (Smith et al., 2009, p. 98). I looked for patterns and ideas that the participants revealed to be particularly meaningful to them. Reflectively, I noted theme titles that I found meaningful or insightful. While creating the themes, I found myself often editing the theme titles or the sub themes as I would continue through an interview. I would try to weigh the value or influence of each idea to help determine if it was a primary theme or a passing idea (Smith et al, 2009, p 98).

Table 7

Developing Emergent Themes

Developing Emergent Themes		
Original Transcripts	Exploratory comments	Emergent themes

Part 3: Themes

For the third phase of my analysis, I began mapping the themes, and with the use of a theme-based table (Table 8), I grouped the themes into similar clusters of data. This table is based on Box 5.5 (Smith et al., 2009, p. 100). Originally, I found myself creating a separate blank document for each interview for examining the themes. With the Theme Page, I created themes from the interview and made a list to visually see the themes in a snapshot. It was my hope during this time to consolidate recurring themes, which might add more value or significance, or to see the polarization of specific themes and how the interviews might contrast in areas. After I created these lists, I had to rearrange each theme into an appropriate cluster for the corresponding interview. The challenge of this phase came when I had to re-insert the themes, pertinent supporting quotes, and additional comments, back into the theme chart with an attached line and page number. I then utilized an online word cloud tool, inserting all the possible theme titles to see which themes were visually represented more often – a form of numeration (Smith et al, 2009, p. 98). Eventually, I found this method to be too inefficient, and instead shifted to using a different approach. I started working my way through each interview, adding themes directly into the corresponding Theme Cluster Table (Table 8).

Table 8

Individual Transcript Theme Clusters

Table of Interview Theme Clusters		
Themes	Page/line	Key Words

During this phase I found myself combining themes, moving themes, deleting themes – fixing the subordinate themes titles – reshaping how titles and their narratives worked together. I found myself including what I believed to be too much emphasis on the participants' quotes and stories and not enough on my own analysis. I was hoping to go back and edit and put in more of my own analysis as I kept working on the interviews. It was difficult because I was afraid that I would lose something that I loved, something in their voice that had become important to me or memorable. At this stage I could not see how I was going to put these themes together yet. I had begun to look at how the themes were going to connect with the other interviews.

During the coding of themes, I made the decision to not have COVID as a major theme, rather I decided to use it as a sub theme that is threaded throughout several major themes. COVID and Parenting, COVID and Teaching in the learning Environment, and COVID and emotions are a few examples of how COVID affected the study and the participants.

Master Themes

Finally, I developed a Master Theme Table (Table 9) like Box 5.6 (Smith et al., 2009, p. 101), and wrote memos where I discussed each of the major themes. This theming process allowed for me to explore any themes that were reoccurring, prominent, or polarizing from each individual interview theme cluster (Smith et al., 2009 p. 91).

Table 9

Master Theme Table

Master Table	
Theme	Lines

Superordinate Themes

Using the Master Theme Table (Table 9), I designed Super-ordinate Themes (Table 10). These major themes grouped together any of the Master Themes that were similar and created a space for the subthemes. I used this final chart to review the results. I took each Master Theme and used the corresponding interview data from the page/line in the exploratory chart to design and interpret the results. I used this data and results to discuss the major themes related to families' experience of school change in the TZ.

Table 10

Superordinate Master Themes and Subthemes from the Master Table

Super-ordinate Master Themes	Sub Themes

Theme Development Example

In this section, as an example, I use the tables described to show how I developed the major themes in my investigation to create the Superordinate Theme, "Transformation Zone," with the subthemes of Awareness of the Transformation Zone Initiative, Application Process and District System, and Segregation and Integration. Below the reader will see the noted transcripts

in Table 11 and then you will see how I moved through the process to show how I used IPA methods to create a meaningful analysis of one aspect of my data.

Table 11

Excerpt Example of Exploratory Comments, Interview 2: Initial Comments

Line number	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
102 103	I think because we came home and I had missed the application period for a magnet, because even as a parent I know there's a difference between the magnets. And also, General. I don't know if they're calling in general, I don't know what they call it these days but non magnet programs, because we came so late. All my kids ended up being in like general zone schools. Yeah, exactly for their zone for and that's not ideal. I remember when they were going to Perkins I woke up at like, 12am, to make sure I got them, you know in line so they could go to this good school and I was teaching them so I got a little bit of leeway there to get them into that school.	Came too late to go to magnet school Feels sad that she had to send them to zoned school. Feels a difference with zoned schools and magnets
104	But there's a difference. There's a difference in expectations. And I don't want to I want to blame it on the school or not so much so I don't think they expected my children to have the support that they did so no one called. And I was constantly hunting them down. I did have one teacher for instance seventh grader, she did have one teacher that sent us progress reports regularly so I always knew where she was in that class.	Difference in expectations Don't want to blame school "I don't think they expected my children to have the support they did…" Tries to be kind about school. "I had to hunt them down"

Table 11

(Continued)

105	So, when I did call a messenger okay	School is helping her – but puts a lot of the responsibility on the kids

After going through the original transcripts several times, supported by the audio

recordings, I created Emergent Themes from the transcripts and the exploratory comments for

each interview (Table 12).

Table 12

Excerpt Example Developing Emergent Themes, Interview 2

Line	Original Transcripts	Exploratory comments	Emergent themes
102	I think because we came home and I had missed the application period for a magnet, because even as a parent I know there's a difference between the magnets. And also, General. I don't know if they're calling in general, I don't know what they call it these days but non magnet programs, because we came so late. All my kids ended up being in like general zone schools.	Came too late to go to magnet school	Magnet Programs
103	Yeah, exactly for their zone for and that's not ideal. I remember when they were going to Perkins I woke up at like, 12am, to make sure I got them, you know in line so they could go to this good school and I was teaching them so I got a little bit of leeway there to get them into that school.	Feels sad that she had to send them to zoned school. Feels a difference with zoned schools and magnets	Zoned Schools
104	But there's a difference.	Difference in expectations	Expectations

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Table 12

(Continued)

105	There's a difference in expectations. And I don't want to I want to blame it on the school or not so much so I don't think they expected my children to have the support that they did so no one called. And I was constantly hunting them down. I did have one teacher for instance seventh grader, she did have one teacher that sent us progress reports regularly so I always knew where she was in that class. And with that help because she was helping me by sending them, I was able to make sure she didn't drown in that class while we were ultimately it's my responsibility to check portal but it's so much easier if they're like, even if they can sit it on autopilot, just let me know what's going on, you know. So, when I did call a messenger okay and now	Don't want to blame school "I don't think they expected my children to have the support they did..." Tries to be kind about school. "I had to hunt them down" She felt like she had to keep up with her kids more than normal.	Parent pushing the education forward

After developing Emergent Themes, I created Theme Clusters, arranging the themes in a variety of patterns – analyzing for comparisons and contrasts. Each interview had a set of Theme Clusters with Key Words.

Table 13

Excerpt Example Creating Theme Clusters, Interview 2

Theme Cluster: TZ	Page/line	Key Words
Unhappy / Discontent Zoning	15/102	a difference between the magnets.
	26/166	disappointed in myself
	27/173	it's gonna be a circus

Table 13

(Continued)

	32/201	Don't take your child there.
	33/209	I don't have much hope for Pinellas
Segregation / Integration	20/129	it's sad to see this separation,
	22/143	have to learn how to live together
	25/161	I wouldn't have them here.
	31/195	unless they're integrating the schools.
	40/250	Reintegrating schools (is answer)
	40/251	having people of mixed cultures,
	41/252	need to either be 100% integrated or
	41/252	100%
	43/256	get a message to the people who make the that's more equitable,
Systematic racism	40/248	did what Pinellas County schools could do,
Teachers' motivation and support	21/139	they don't get the resources they need
	21/141	but they are overwhelmed.
Awareness	25/156	I don't know the transformation Zone

Table 13

Benefits	26/166	Okay, I'll say that it's free.
School Change	130/187	I don't know about the changes.
	130/190	are my kids schools included in there,

Next, I analyzed and compared both sets of the cluster themes from each interview and created a Master Table of Themes with key words and phrases (Table 14).

Table 14

Excerpt Example from Master Table of Theme with Notes, Interview 1 and Interview 2

Master Themes	**Page Number**	**Line**	**Interview Number**
Awareness			
I don't know about the TZ.	25	156	2
No	18	198	1
I'm not quite sure what a T zone is.	19	211	1
I don't know about the changes.	30	187	2
Are my kids schools included in there?	30	190	2
Unhappy / Discontent Zoning:			
a difference between the magnets.	15	102	2
disappointed in myself	26	166	2
it's gonna be a circus	27	173	2
Don't take your child there.	32	201	2
I don't have much hope for Pinellas	33	209	2

After creating the Master Theme Table (Table 14) I analyzed the Master Themes and created the Super-ordinate Theme Table (Table 15). This table is the final table for this phase of analysis, combining all the Master Themes and Subthemes into one table for reference.

Table 15

Superordinate Master Themes and Subthemes

Super-ordinate Master Themes	Subthemes
Core Family Values	
	Trust and Truth Failures Judging Others
Parents' Perceptions of Children	
Significant Challenges	
	Disability and Learning Challenges Racial, Cultural, and Gender Identity
Transformation Zone (TZ)	
	Awareness of the Transformation Zone Application Process and District System Segregation and Integration
Teachers and Families	
	Learning Environment and COVID Parent and Teacher Relationships Positive Experiences Student Success and Expectations

Findings Interpretation and Analysis Description

The following data were the findings from Table 15 Superordinate Master Themes and Subthemes. I used this table and the corresponding line numbers from the Master Table to locate the quoted extracts from the original transcript. Each theme has a corresponding researcher interpretation and extracts from the participants as supporting evidence. It has been my effort to help share their stories while maintaining a researcher's perspective. In this type of work, the

participants voice is a rich data source. The participant's interview extracts are open to interpretation and have the benefit of transparency.

These themes and their analysis were shared with the second Community Focus Group in the spring of 2023. This second group consisted of the five original members, as well as one of the participants. All the participants were invited to the second meeting. The family member present showed most interest in the theme of the core family values. She felt strongly that this was the foundation for her interview and helping to understand her as a person and as a parent. Each of the CFG members felt that the theme development and the analysis was detailed and accurate. They related that they thought the transcript coding and interpretive nature of the analysis was challenging for the researcher to accomplish. The CFG were drawn to many of the significant quotes from some of the excerpts and I realized that the CFG was particularly interested in how the sub-themes of race and disabilities played a role in the families' lives.

Superordinate Theme: Core Family Values

One of the most common themes was the focus on family values, core values, and social values. I believe these values are the foundation from many of the results from the interview questions. These ideas were often presented subtly, although there were a few outstanding moments where it was noted explicitly. Each of the interviewed families shared significant values formed around similar themes: trust and truth, failures, and judging others.

Trust and Truth

One of the key core family values expressed was the emphasis each family placed on trust and truth in a variety of areas in their lives. They wanted their children to seek out answers and try to accomplish things in life through exploration. During this exploration it was important to the participants to treat others with respect.

Ada: I instill values in him that I believe we might lack in society, to help them grow as a

person, is to treat people the way you want to be treated. Mind your manners, mean what

you say and say what you mean. Regardless of if it hurts anybody, you know, I always

tell him, doesn't matter if it, if it'll hurt someone or not.

It was clear throughout the interview that Ada felt strongly about the value of truth - that

above all, truth was necessary.

Ada: Tell them the truth. Sometimes he's a little too honest. But, I taught him. I taught

him that. It's a family value. That's a family value to me. Doesn't matter how they feel

about it. Just make sure you tell them.

In the second CFG, this sub-theme was the most important to the mother attending the

meeting. She referenced how this theme, the value of truth and being truthful, was core to how

she wanted to raise her children. I was surprised by the extent of truth she was willing to use – to

tell the truth even if it hurts someone, and I wondered about her motivation for expressing truth

as her most valued theme in the second CFG meeting. I was also grateful for her passion and

commitment to the study.

Failures

Both parents shared how much anxiety and fear affected their children and the different

types of techniques they were creating both in the home and at school to help their children

succeed. Their approach to handling fear, anxiety, and failure was a foundational element. Both

groups were clear in that they wanted to accept failures and then put into practice appropriate

approaches to help overcome them.

Ada's approach to failure and adversity is to explicitly encourage her children to conquer

or overcome failures and fear.

Ada: What I try to get him to understand it's a superpower. Okay, it's a superpower that, you know, I try to make it seem like it's so exclusive like God only gives it to the, you know, some of the coolest kids you know, just so that he can, he can embrace it.... It doesn't mean you can't do it, it just means you do it a different way.

Ada's use of encouragement also reveals her confidence in her child and begins to highlight the additional challenges to her child and family. She utilizes mental practices and techniques to guide him.

Ada: We just prepare in terms of getting his mind together, because I really believe that that's the first step, mindset getting his mind together let him know you know, you got this. You can do this. Okay, now let's work on the reading, let's work on the sight words let's work on it, things like that.

Tasha's approach to failure and adversity was similar. She takes a strong encouraging tone, while also exploring the uniqueness of each of her children.

Tasha: She (seventh grader) is kind of perfectionist, so like helping her to accept being wrong, your whole day was, you know, she got one thing wrong. She's like, the worst day of my life, and literally she scores them, so just trying to get her not to be so upset, and like be a little bit more resilient and knowing that, like there's something in failing. So, we accept failure. Okay.

This is a moment where Tasha revealed the different ways in which she parents her children. She seeks to understand each of their individual needs, and often it can be seen how she is studying her children.

Tasha: And then my fifth grader just getting him to ask questions, to be successful and then for my second grader helping her to accept failure, and like actually use it for

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something better, like fuel.... We eat failures, we eat them. (Spoken with a strong tone of excitement).

Both sets of families focus on actively creating steps when encountering failures. Both mothers create a tone of confidence and reframing the situation, I believe in a hope of teaching their children about their capabilities, and how fears, anxiety, and failures are a part of their life. This to them is a life skill.

Judging Others

Tasha and Ada share a world view on how to approach social judgments and how to manage other's judgments.

Ada: You'll see what I teach him, is that it is okay for people to be themselves. You don't necessarily have to like it but it is not your place to judge it.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?

Ada: Sure, you, you're going to be around kids that are different, and it is okay for them to be different, but it is not okay for you to pick on them or judge them for being different. You accept people for who they are, and you accept people for who they are not. Those are one of the things that I, I teach him so that he'll understand interpersonal skills when he gets older, because I believe it's important. We live in a society that we don't accept people for who they are. And I don't want him to grow up to be an adult bully, and adult bullies are some of the saddest people, I believe. So the lessons that I teach him is to accept people for who they are, accept people for who they are, don't have to like it, but you don't have a right to judge it.

Like Ada, Tasha emphasizes how her family core values are expressed to everyone. She places an emphasis that runs throughout her interview on how to treat others.

Tasha: Like, like I said, everyone's different. I mean we have overall kindness loving patience, all that stuff.

How these families express their foundational values - trust and truth, failures, and managing judgement, are pivotal in understanding how they view the schools in their communities and their social experiences. It is helpful to understand that each of these families places an emphasis on understanding their children. To examine how the TZ initiative might affect families, it is important to understand how the parents perceive their children and the significant challenges that might affect their lives.

Superordinate Theme: Parent's Perception of Children

The families shared a clear sense of caring for their children. The participants shared stories and times in which they tried to be aware of the needs of the children, their children's personality traits, and creative steps to help their children succeed.

Ada: I will sit with him, and make sure he reads things that are there and things that aren't there. And he's very good at math, so I don't have to really sit with him with math, but there was a time that I had to really help him with his sight words and the reading lesson that with, with the sight words. And he passed that test. We were very, very proud of him for that.

In one specific moment, Ada discusses her child's learning interest in detail. She is keenly aware of his studies and practices, but mostly there is a sense of pride and joy when she is discussing what her son has been learning:

Ada: He loves learning about it. He tells me these things about cephalopods, and he tells me, cephalopod week ... He learns, what is it called when you learn by sight? (Audible sound of pride and excited speech pattern).

Interviewer: Like a visual learner?

Ada: He's a visual learner. So, if he could see it, read it, He got it. He has it. He can do. And that's why I tell him all the time he just can't get away with certain stuff with me. He could do long division in his head. Not everybody can do long division.

Tasha talks in detail about each of her kids with knowledge. It is clear she wants to be a good parent – she tries to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each of her children. Like Ada, Tasha has a tone of pride when she talks about her kids.

I mean because they're also different, they're hilarious, all three collectively I will tell you they're funny children. They're really, really not sweet to each other, but to other people, they're very kind. I'm working on that inner house dynamic thing. They're really kind and considerate, and I like to think that they are good thinkers, and they ask great questions, I think, I think they're very inquisitive, ask great questions.

There were times when Tasha expressed that she feels like some of her children have similar mannerisms and personality traits as herself. Her oldest daughter struggles with time management and memory skills. She feels as if her daughter does not fit easily into a public school – like herself:

Tasha: So they all have different problems, so seventh grader is really all over the place, which will turn out to be her gift when she gets older, it just doesn't fit within the school system now, but, like me, she's like me, so I can relate.... When it was time at the end of the day when, when there's free tech time, you know, she has nothing to do, because she's forgotten everything, she has left during the school time so yeah, that's so that's her.

Tasha's fifth grader, however, struggles more with knowing when to ask for help. She feels he is very independent and needs to learn how to ask questions.

Tasha: And then fifth grader, I think he thought he's born to know everything…. He

doesn't like to ask for help so working with him too. Say, okay, I'm having a problem

here, and I need your help. It's not a bad thing. It's good.

At one point, Tasha reveals how she feels about being a parent, that she loves her

children, but that her and husband are still managing how to be successful themselves. In the

middle of a question, Tasha will have a meaningful thoughtful moment – exposing how she

perceives her children and how she is a teacher by nature. She explores how to teach them the

skills and traits she wants them to have in their lives and why these values matter to her family:

Tasha: Second grader is very impatient. It's funny when you can see your kids'

downfalls, like their mirrors like you know, you can see, I can see like how my husband's

coming to my shortcomings have come to be a part of our children. So, we always give

them our best advice and are sucking it up secretly for ourselves too.... I am impatient,

and so is second grader. So, together we work on being patient, like what are we going to

do while we wait, you know, because we never really define being patient, like, what

does it mean? (Speech pattern reflective and thoughtful, slow in moments).

I found this part of her interview important at revealing the character of the parents, their

beliefs and values, but also how they perceive their children. Specifically, I find that they are

interested in whether their children are developing in ways that they hope will align with their

family values – is their child inquisitive, are they kind, do they respect others and others' beliefs?

Superordinate Theme: Significant Challenges

Some of the key areas that both sets of parents focus on with their children are the types

of challenges their children experience. While some of these challenges could be labeled positive

or negative, primarily parents shared how their children learn and how others perceive their

children socially and academically. At some points this is focused on the children's learning disabilities, and other times it is seen in the parents' feelings about the children's race and gender.

Disabilities and Learning Challenges

Both groups of families have children that the school system has diagnosed with significant learning challenges. Learning challenges affect their education, environment, and social life choices. This sub theme was a major discussion point for the second CFG. They wanted to understand better how the parent's felt they were treated. They wanted to know more about perception the parent's had about their children with disabilities related to their school environment. The CFG responses appeared to be from a place of concern and inquiry. Ada reveals how her son's diagnosis specifically affects his education and personal view of himself:

Ada: Yeah, he has ADHD. So, his comprehension is a little slower, and he's always been. I've tried, I've always tried to figure out a way to say this. It takes him a little longer to grasp, certain things that most people or most children can grasp a little easier. So him having that attention deficit disorder and the comprehension, makes it difficult for him to have that confidence booster or he gives up, because it gets too hard. And I get it. I understand.

She goes on to describe how being diagnosed with ADHD affects his personal view of himself and how this perception plays a role in his education:

Ada: That the challenge is ADHD is a, is a big challenge at school and at home but definitely at school. It is affected his, his self-esteem, self-confidence, self-worth.

Interviewer: What do you mean ?

Ada: Well because he gets so frustrated that he can't do what other kids can do and it's very simple.

Interviewer: You mean it affected him in a negative way?

Ada: It affects him greatly so that's why I had to get him on the 503 plan to give him more time. (Spoken quickly, with strong emphasis on 'greatly').

Interviewer: What do you mean by 503 plan?

Ada: It's a plan that's set in place by, not sure if it's I think it's by the state by the state, that kids with disabilities or learning disabilities will have more time.

Interviewer: So, it's an accommodation?

Ada: Yeah, so his accommodations are extra time with testing, extra one-on-one time smaller groups, smaller chunks of time to get his work done and things like that so that will bring that the positive impact was that he was able to get accommodations for his, you know, ADHD.

Ada reveals how her child's personal view of himself affects his education and her parenting style. She embraces his differences, a theme I see rooted in one of her family values and encourages him to reframe the challenge; an idea she calls his superpower. There is a moment where she shows her family's faith, and the role it plays in their life. It's also here that I see her knowledge of the resources provided to her children, and the specific accommodations he needs to be successful. She is aware of his needs and is seeking methods to support him. There is a feeling that she is a caring parent and tries to provide opportunities for him to be successful or fail. There is a thread throughout her interview that shows she wants him to achieve tasks through support and resilience. This is an idea common to Tasha as well. Her children have had life changes and educational changes based on their individual needs and support:

Tasha: Well, I think she might be dyslexic, so reading is hard for her.

Tasha, a former educator in public schools approaches her children's learning styles individually. She highlights how changes in education and the stigmas surrounding autism have changed in her life.

Tasha: I think, because they're mine, they're different kinds of learners.… I believe, like what we're experiencing with autism isn't new, but people were less tolerant. And so, like it might get yelled out to you or screamed or beat, or you might get grounded for the things that you do.

I find this insight helpful in the sense that in her quiet speech about autism she clearly laid out a privilege I had not considered - the joy of letting children learn at their own pace in their own way. Yet she explains that if her children take this approach, she perceives it will be deadly for them – that Black boys, even quiet young Black boys, do not have the privilege to behave the way an autistic child might behave.

Tasha: As far as my boys with the autism they say they shouldn't get the behavior (therapy) that they are, because they (teachers) don't want to change them. I was like that is a luxury for White children – not a luxury for my boys, if they don't get behavior therapy, they'll be dead no matter where we live, no matter how much we have, no matter how much it doesn't matter.(Strong speech patterns, emphasis on specific words: my boys, luxury; quick speech in no matter where we live…).

I think it is her tone that grips me the most. She does not speak out of rage, frustration, or fear – it feels like it is the speech of awareness. It is a matter of every day– a fact for her, that she feels like it is dangerous for her children to be Black and have a learning disability.

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Racial, Cultural, and Gender Identity

Both participants share concerns about how race is involved in their children's education. The CFG discussed this theme, specifically race and gender with detail. There might have been more interest during the meeting due to the social issues that were affect the current landscape. The responses of the CFG were centered around their own experiences and seeking to understand better how the mother's felt about raising a child in this county. There were moments where they expressed that they felt as if the children were being mistreated or underrepresented.

> Ada: So, but I know his frustration, I get his anger I get his, you know, it really weighs on your, your mental (pausing) - like what's wrong with me. (Slow, thoughtful speech,) And as a boy, I don't really know because I'm not a boy. And, you know, to be a boy and be around other boys and wanting to fit in and, you know I'm trying to monitor all of that, because this is the time where you got to pay attention.... So, this negatively impacts him in a way where I can see it, he can open doors for him to go completely backwards. If I don't continue to (say): you are worthy, you are good, you do have a superpower, your brain - there's nothing wrong with you.

Tasha shares a strong view on how she sees her children, specifically her boys, in our society and schools. At times it felt as if she was trying to share her point of view as a person of color to someone who could not understand – a sense of clarity and illuminating a complex and normalized reality for her. It felt kind. There were several comments about how the parents felt that the school and society saw Black children as trouble, disruptive, violent and dangerous, and heading towards jail.

> Tasha: It's not going well he's, he's, he's like, I can see a lot of me in him and like so excited to pull him out there so he can skip all of the stuff, Black boys don't do well here.

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Interviewer: So, you know I have to ask what do you mean but boys don't do well here?

Tasha: I think the county is a supplier for the jails, because they don't (pausing)… first of all, there are many of them that don't have their fathers. My son was in in preschool…His dad was like everyone's dad, so he go in and parent, everybody you know that's, that's what he did, because they didn't have any dad's around.(Quick speech pattern).

When she talks about her son being a Black boy in this county it is unsettling. When she speaks, her tone, is filled with such confidence and wisdom, but she speaks as if she is certain of what will happen to him. This section has strong feelings for her, for me, and from response from the CFG. The group asked clarifying questions to better understand her perception. For me, she is like a quiet icon, a voice of reason in defiance of the stereotypes created socially and politically. She speaks with intelligence, and she feels that no matter what she does, no matter how educated or wealthy her sons are – they are always at risk, at risk for violence from others.

Tasha: And just to see the Black boys require so much because they're always, I'm sure might be the same for white boys I always try to line between being what my husband calls the lion, or the lamb. You know what I mean. Being strong or being kind and gentle. So, they'll always straddle that line and so they don't always have a great, you know, model for what to do. They're winging it. And so, it's like what does that look like they're gonna be fighting, they're gonna be cussing, they're gonna be doing all kinds of stuff. So, and I really feel like, Like, (pause) they're essential- Black boys are essential (Strong emphasis on essential) because there's so few of them, even my husband, he doesn't have his degree. So, they only just don't get very far. You know, so. Yeah, and I just didn't want fifth grade to be a part of that. And so, it's true, he was, he was having troubles and with his behaviors, but it's, it's huge because he's Black, and White kids do the same stuff

he's doing, but it's not a big deal because they're not as threatening as he is, I don't know, like he's kindergarten, how threatening can you be? (Strong emphasis on kindergarten, pained sounding).

Tasha: Just a little wakeup call that, although I'm educated, we're not in poverty, that my boy is going to get it too. I've never doubted it.

Tasha emphasizes that with each of these social achievement areas that she has succeed – she has higher level education degrees, works and has worked professional career jobs, has traveled the world, is a successful parent, maintained healthy relationships, and is financial stable. Yet her voice still has the same fears and understandings.

Superordinate Theme: The Transformation Zone

This is backdrop for the exploration into the TZ initiative and its effects on families. The parents have expressed their family values, how they manage the specific challenges they face as they steer their children to the values they prioritize, and how they feel race and gender affect their children and families. It is with all this foundation that they enter the TZ initiative – schools specifically targeted for achievement support due to lower performing scores. These schools have higher rates of students with free and reduced lunch and are primarily students of color.

Awareness of the Transformation Zone Initiative

Both sets of parents were unaware that their children and the schools they attended were in the TZ. They did not know about the purpose of the TZ and what role it played in their school.

Interviewer: Did you know that your school is part of the Transformation Zone Initiative.

Ada: No (quietly spoken)

Interviewer: How do you feel about your school being labeled a Transformation Zone school? I guess the real question is, okay, go back to the idea of like do you know what the Transformation Zone is?

Ada: I don't. (Spoken quickly and firm)

Interviewer: Okay, so how do you feel about your school being labeled a transformation zone school?

Ada: I don't have a feeling because I'm not quite sure what is a Transformation Zone. If I'm to guess. I can't even guess because transformation can be anything, it's very broad. Yeah, it's very broad so I wouldn't be able to even guess what it means. I don't have a feeling. (Quick speech rhythm with hesitancy between words)

Tasha has a similar reaction when we discuss the TZ:

Tasha: I don't know the transformation Zone Initiative...I don't know about the changes. So is that what the schools, are my kids' schools included in there?(Quick speech rhythm, tone concerned sounding)

This series of questions about their participants knowledge and expectations of the TZ schools was a difficult section for me during the interview. It was appeared to me that the parents were both uncomfortable with answering questions about the TZ and that they did not understand the term. As a parent, it can be uncomfortable when you discover your child is a part of a system or a process that you are not familiar with in your life or feel as if you should have been aware. This I think is particularly true with schools. In this section, Tasha's responses were quick and questioning. She appeared unsure of what the TZ was and the role it played in her children's education. As a previous teacher in this county, she spoke with a sense of defeat – as if any program or system set up would be symbolic and not confront the changes she feels need to be

made. In Ada's interview, she displayed signs of a mother being told that her child is in a program that she did was not aware was happening with her family. She seemed distraught that the school would be participating in a practice and not inform the parents. Ada was an active parent in the school, participating on the PTA and actively trying to communicate with her son's teachers.

I do not feel as if my tone or my question method made them uncomfortable. The parents revealed to me at this point that they were comfortable with the questions, and did not ask to make any changes to their responses after the study. I was initially surprised to learn that neither of the parents were knowledgeable about the TZ. In the first meeting of the CFG all the members were aware of the TZ and the role it played in the schools. This might be true because several of the members of the CFG had roles in the community that interacted at a more district wide level. It is also my experience with elementary schools in this area that the schools do not share in depth details of their school administration processes with the parents. I could tell that the parents were caught off guard by the TZ school questions, and I tried to take a reassuring tone and a lighter touch as I proceeded through this series of questions. I was aware however that, as an IPA researcher, I needed to maintain fidelity and validity to the questions, so I tried to be careful not to add any additional comments or clarifying remarks that were not included in the interview schedule.

Application Process and System

The TZ schools are in a county with many high performing schools. Many of the highest achieving schools are magnet program schools. These schools have a specific focus and discipline in their curriculum and culture. For example, a school might be a center for the arts or focus on technology. These schools require an application process that is part of a lottery system.

Some of the TZ schools are part of this lottery system; however, most years they have had significantly less applicants and the acceptance has not been as competitive. Most of the TZ schools are considered Neighborhood Schools, and students attend their zoned school. Being admitted into the zoned Neighborhood School and not a magnet schools was an area of distress for one of the participants:

Tasha: I think it was because we came home and I had missed the application period for a magnet, because even as a parent I know there's a difference between the magnets. And also, General. I don't know if they're calling in General, I don't know what they call it these days but non-magnet programs, because we came so late. All my kids ended up being in like general zone schools. (Quiet)

Tasha is uncomfortable sending her children to her zoned school. She feels as if she did not take the steps she wanted for her family to help them get into a magnet school.

Tasha: How do I feel? I'm ultimately disappointed. I'm even more disappointed in myself because I wasn't able to get them again into another magnet school for this year. So, I'm going to be dealing with this for the next year for the next school year... But I'll say this. It's free. I mean the school. Okay, I'll say that it's free.

Interviewer: Could you elaborate this part, could you tell me a little more.

Tasha: Yeah, like, okay, so, um, so I'm saying, if I, if I had my choice if I had my money,(pause) I wouldn't definitely not put them with this county... because when I first found out I couldn't get them into their magnets. I almost lost my mind that was oh my god, they're gonna be with everyone. It's gonna be crazy, it's gonna be a circus. I'm thinking back to my days, you know, the general circus. But then I remember, I had my good kids, and my good kids work hard.

I believe this was a hard moment for Tasha as parent. It feels as if she has knowledge from her previous experiences and from other parents in her community that her children should not attend a neighborhood school, and because of the timing of her children's enrollment, she has limited choices. In this county, it can feel as a parent that your child is at a disadvantage if you do not win the selective lottery service for a magnetic or fundamental school. The application process for magnet programs, for schools that are not zoned public schools, is challenging and requires additional resources of time and computer access to complete. The window for the deadlines for the process is one week, and often parents try to visit schools of interest before the application window. The parameters for the application period are weighted by living distance to the schools, sibling preference, and the number of applicants. There is often a sense of uncertainty and discomfort on where their child might attend school, a decision that shapes their immediate and future life. All these factors can be a challenge to enroll a child into a school that is not a TZ school. This is the context for understanding Tasha's statements about her apprehension with having her child in a TZ school. These factors might be why she explains she is disappointed in herself, and not being able to get her children into a different school. It is an burden of discomfort that I have felt in my own interaction with the county and that I believe no mother or parent should be forced to feel – to feel as if it is their fault that their child is not being educated to the standards and values they would hope for their own children.

Segregation and Integration

While the schools in this county consist of a variety of programs and students, the TZ schools are mostly comprised on lower income, African American students. Although the schools are not legally segregated, Tasha feels as if there are clear separations of race. She explains that this form of segregation is not beneficial to the education of her children.

Tasha: Then, it's, it's sad to see this separation, because it really like cheats both sets of children.... The kids are equally naughty you know - that's the reality of it, there are naughty White kids, and they're naughty Black kids so we need to put them together so they can learn something from each other.

She continues this thought with a strong recommendation to find methods to reintegrate the school's diversity:

Tasha: They have to mix the schools, again, (emphasis) we have to be together because we have to learn how to live together as an adult, but I feel like it's by design because we grew up my whole, my whole childhood was like mixed.... (pausing) How did this happen, how did we regress? And it's gonna cost us our community.

There is repeated emphasis on how segregation and integration has changed since Tasha's time as a student in this county and how this negative change can affect our current society.

Tasha: The problem doesn't lay squarely on the county shoulders, it's systemic, so. But I will tell you if the school county did what the school county could do, it'd be a whole lot better. Even if they could only do what they could do and not deal with everything.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Tasha: Reintegrating the schools. (Strong emphasis on this phrase).

Sometimes, sometimes you'll get a real brilliant White person that understands the value of having, having people of mixed cultures, be together because there's value in that there's value because you're going to be able to learn about your customer if you're selling stuff, you know, you'll get those people, but they're not ready to risk it at this young age, I understand their pause.

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I interpret Tasha's reference to risking it at this young age, as a reference to how she interprets the school leaders are not willing take what could be considered a big risk with young children or with children in the elementary schools. Tasha's references to reintegrating schools would require the school district to reinstate county wide busing – a traditionally expensive and potentially contentious issue. This school district eliminated bussing programs at the implementation of the neighborhood school campaign. These neighborhood schools are now the schools in the TZ program.

Upon rereading these I feel that the participants might be interpreted as angry. I think there are times when they are serious; however it feels like their responses are from a place of caring and hope – not from anger and defeat. Tasha expresses her view on segregation more clearly when she discusses with detail.

> Tasha: I hope this social experiment ends soon, and we need to either be 100% integrated or 100% segregated, no in between.... On paper it looks like every school is integrated on paper, and it's just like they're getting away with this ruthlessness and no one's doing anything about it. And so, I'm ... it's brilliant, it's actually brilliant, (exasperation) but if I can get a message to the people who make the changes that would be that you don't know it yet but you're missing out, because we all need each other.

This message is central to Tasha's feelings about her children's education. She knows she can teach her children, and is comfortable with raising them in a different environment. She struggles with staying in this county and with these schools:

> Tasha: Yeah. If my mom wasn't here, and ageing. My children wouldn't be here, because this county failed me and my mom did the work….(pause). Yeah, I wouldn't, I wouldn't

have them here. I would, I would have them somewhere else more integrated, somewhere

that's more balanced. (Quietly spoken)

Superordinate Theme: Teachers and Families

There are several areas of interest when discussing the TZ schools themes centered

around teachers and families. Both sets of parents placed an emphasis on the learning

environments in the classrooms and how COVID affected their schools. Similarly, there is

significant data on how the parents perceived their parent and teacher relationships, positive

experiences with the schools, and how the TZ schools managed student success and

expectations.

Learning Environment and the Effects of COVID

COVID was a major factor throughout with both parents in making decisions. There is

specific information as to what their schools were like before and during COVID processes, how

COVID procedures affect their child's learning and the effects these processes have on their

children's learning disabilities.

Ada: COVID has changed everything. So, that's the only change but that was a global

change.

Interviewer: What do you mean change? COVID?

Ada: Well, it changed how they interacted with each other, they changed social, well

because they had to go home. And so they didn't have those social skills and the social

interactions that they would normally, somewhere brick and mortar, some were, you

know, split some were just virtual. That I do believe plays on children, social skills.

Ada feels that her child, especially with his ADHD diagnosis, has a difficult experience

learning in a COVID adapted classroom. These classrooms began as virtual only for a semester,

and later reopened as a hybrid style, with some children choosing to participate at home while others were in the physical classroom. The students at home had the same expectations as the in-person students; however the teacher would use a camera or computer to teach both groups of children at once.

> Ada: Yeah, so you just for me, I knew it would not work for him. He has to be hands on, brick and mortar, okay. He's too hyper to sit still at home in the same location.... The only changes I saw is that and I was concerned because I don't want him to … I believe this generation has lost a lot … they want the technology, and I didn't want him to get caught up in that.

As stated earlier, one of Ada's primary family values is creating an environment where her children are interacting with others creatively. She has a focus on helping her child be resilient in problem solving and life situations. She does feel as if her child's generation is too involved in technological experiences, which was only exasperated due to the systems put in place for COVID.

> Ada: I don't feel like they do that anymore, they trip. They hurt themselves and then the world is over and it's like, baby get up, because we played on monkey bars and, you know what I mean, we toughed it out, we had a different child, different type of upbringing.

Due to COVID, Tasha's children started out learning at home in a hybrid environment. Tasha's primary concern is about her children's ability to learn in the hybrid classroom style, specifically her son. Tasha's son was unable to attend a classroom in person and would log in each morning online. Tasha explained that this was a negative experience for her son.

Tasha: But watching their teachers who are there, people hollering screaming at them, I'm like, it was like a mirror and I'm like, it's not working right. So, when I got back here and I listened to how my son's teacher was yelling and he had these headphones, and this coming directly into his ears directly, into his soul. (Strong emphasis on 'yelling')

Interviewer: Because it's, it's virtual school, or this COVID year he's listening on the headphones?

Tasha: Right, so she's talking to the people in her classrooms, and the people on the computer. And so, it's just this constant, angry, yelling feeling just coming, you know, into the ears it was just, and, and had him sitting with me many other days and I just couldn't listen to it anymore. I was like, oh my god, Stop yelling at these kids. It doesn't work. (Exasperation sounding)

For Tasha this has become her new normal – an online hybrid classroom, where she can hear what the classroom is like during the day. This style of teaching can be hard for parents and teachers. This style gives a unique insight into what is happening in a classroom in a way that has not been socially available before COVID. Tasha recounts some of the experiences that she encountered in her TZ school classroom:

Tasha: So that was challenging to stay focused and not worry about what other people were doing especially since that sound was coming in, like, if she's yelling at one of the kids, it's coming through to all the children. So that was, that was very difficult for him to overcome and I don't think he did.

I found it interesting that Tasha labeled distracting children as normal classroom behavior. As if she expects children at TZ schools to be distracted or the classrooms to have distractions. It is a glimpse into a classroom she has not had the opportunity to view with her

own children. Now, Tasha can see the classroom behavior management, teaching practices, and how other children are learning live in real time. These practices may have been similar or different before COVID; however because of the changes the schools made during COVID, now parents had an opportunity to witness classroom environment and instruction live.

> Tasha: So, in that and that directly impacts me because those are going to be the ones that are going to struggle the worst in the classroom, right next to my daughter. And because they're not learning anything they're probably gonna try to keep her from learning because what else is there to do when you're bored, except for destroy and interrupt.

> With this new lens, Tasha was able to compare her different children's teachers. She felt that several of the teachers, especially during COVID, were trying to help their students as much as possible, while other teachers would regularly not communicate or be available to teach.

> Tasha: Seventh grade teacher, one was helpful. The other ones not so much. Like some days she would not be in class, and don't tell me. And my second grader says I don't have school today. Oh, how don't you have school. Everyone else in school, how do you not have school, right, like my teacher is not here. She didn't tell me, so I messaged her, I'm like if you're leaving, you know, let me know so I can watch her because she will be doing some crazy stuff.

> Due to the safety and health concerns around COVID, Tasha decided to not bring her children onto a school campus, even for statewide testing.

> Tasha: So, I had no plans on taking him to campus. Okay, so they just, you know kept asking you for the assessments for him to come for this and for him to come down and I was telling, none of my children. Right, they don't. First of all, this is a high risk.... She's like it's safe, they sent me pictures. They really tried to their credit, they really tried.

During this time Tasha decided to enroll her fifth grader into Virtual Home School (VHS), a state public system to complete his assignments at home fully online.

Tasha: Fifth grader pretty much gave up in February, he was done trying. So that was heartbreaking. So we pushed him on through to finish that last quarter and then I took him out. Started virtual home school Um, so that was, that was a bad impact.

Tasha felt that the school system was not able to support their teachers during this time, that COVID was hard on her family and hard on the schools.

Tasha: and COVID was so hard, so I have to tell you, I must have. I didn't do too well this year. I expected more flexibility for the teachers. Because if they're more stressed than the children then there's no delivery, delivery is gonna be bad every time from like the administration....(pausing).

You can't do the same stuff online with 10-year-olds that you can do face to face, but I expected a lot more leniency for the, for the teachers to have more agency to figure this crap out. Could you imagine?

Parent and Teacher Relationships

Relationships with teachers are a pivotal factor for these families. Both families reported a desire to actively communicate with the schools and teachers. Each family had different methods for communication and stressed the need to have a healthy working relationship with the teachers to help their children succeed educationally.

Ada: Yeah, but I made sure that door was open, that that's a two-way street, you know, well, street, they couldn't keep that communication with me if I wasn't willing to have it. You know I had to be willing to be an active participant in my child's life. I had to tell them, hey, here's my number, text me, call me.

For Ada, the relationship is valuable to helping her child. There are times academically that her son needs support, and times where she feels that the school is an extension of the community. She reports that her teacher might have insight into her son that she might otherwise not be able to observe.

Ada: Because they see a side that I might not see, I see a side they might not see.(Quick speech pattern).

So because of that I have to listen and say you know what I did. I saw a little trait of that before. You heard something like that him say something like that before. Instead of just completely. That's not my child. No, probably it is my child and I need to address it.

Ada finds value in connecting with the school and teachers on her son's performance and has taken steps to become involved on the school campus. She expressed that this also gives her insight into understanding the school culture and helps keep her informed. She also shared that part of her role in helping her child is to help the teachers feel supported.

Ada: I was part of the PTA. And I can honestly say that they really do put their best foot forward to try to give the kids the best experience that they can.... The thing is I want to make sure they feel appreciated, because if you feel appreciated, you're going to treat my child a little better, and I don't have to come up there.

By joining these clubs, and being active on campus, Ada feels as if this time has helped understand some of the challenges of being a TZ teacher during COVID. She feels that part of the relationship is having the ability to have empathy and support.

Ada: I have to understand what she carries; I may never know. Being an educator, in this day and age. I will never understand what they go through.

There are moments where both parents' express expectations they have for the teachers and their relationships. Their family values become apparent as they work with the teachers and schools. These parents expect regular updates on their children's progress and could see a difference in some of the schools and teachers.

Tasha: I did have one teacher for instance for seventh grader, she did have one teacher that sent us progress reports regularly, so I always knew where she was in that class. And with that help because she was helping me by sending them, I was able to make sure she didn't drown in that class.... The fifth-grade teachers, they are on board, they're like how can I help? What can we do, she called me. We did two or three conferences, gave me books suggestions, game suggestions, like really helped me. There is hope with the teachers.

Tasha echoed similar sentiments from Ada on some of the teacher burn out from COVID. She was able to witness through her communications times where the teachers were overwhelmed and struggling.

Tasha: That maybe even the teachers have given up because they don't get the resources they need to deal.

Interviewer: So, you mean the teachers at the schools?

Tasha: Yeah, it feels that way, it does. But they love them (the kids). They were excited for them, they were trying to motivate them, but they are overwhelmed. And they are not being supported properly.... I'm emailing in the dead space for probably the first semester, but it was COVID. I gave a lot of leeway. Next year, I'm not having this. Next year everybody's talking to me. I'm gonna have a problem right. So, this year I gave a lot of leeway cuz I'm sucking at parenting. Oh, everybody, everybody gets free pass.

Although COVID results and themes were prevalent throughout the study, there were many positive experiences that both families experienced. These stories often centered around student success and teacher support.

Ada: Honestly, I only have really good stories about my child's school. Most of the teachers that he has have been on that battlefield, that frontline with me to try to get him to succeed. Every single teacher. So, the only stories that I have are good.... One situation I had was his fourth-grade teacher called me and she's like, listen, she says I'm so proud of him. I'm so happy I had to call you. She said he was beaming. She's always saying you have the most precious child.

With her participation in the school's PTA, Ada was able to have more insight into the culture of school, often seeing many of the positive ways that the schools were trying to reach out to the students and families and support the teachers.

Ada: They made sure Valentine's for the teachers, you know, Black History Month, Fiesta Night, Teacher Appreciation, all of those events that the school put together. Behind the scenes, showed me a lot about how the school was ran that most people would not see.

Ada's school helped her with her family focus on encouraging her children and approaching struggles with resilience. It was several of these teacher and classroom moments of perseverance and hard work that stood out to her as being the most positive. The teachers in her school listened to her input and implemented several of their ideas in the classroom.

Ada: I told the teacher that I give my son, you know mantras, and I give him words of encouragement. And she said that she starts to do that too in a classroom.... And because

she was doing that, I noticed his vocabulary start to change a bit or his statements start to change. I know I can do this. I believe I can do this. This isn't hard. I was surprised because he would be the first one, I can't do this and get frustrated and cry like at home, at school, too. And I noticed when, when she started to implement it after our conversation is when I started to notice. Okay, he started to be more positive.(Positive tone, full of pride).

Tasha's family had different positive experiences. Although there were struggles during COVID and with classroom learning, she also felt that the teachers cared about her children. Tasha's second grader was honored at one point for succeeding and credits her teachers for the support.

Tasha: So I told you, she was awarded the best second grader.... And so that was really nice, and they gave it to her because she was just, she never gave up. Even when it was hard, and she was embarrassed to read sometimes she just plowed through it, and so that was exciting for her.... I think it was a positive, because our teachers, they were hard, but they cared about her, and she felt that, so that was very nice.

The TZ school provided Tasha with computers for at home learning during COVID while the children were learning remotely. Tasha saw this as a positive gesture, although not always useful.

Tasha: The fact that they had a computer available for her was something that was great, although it didn't work and getting them to repair it was like pulling teeth, I was just like okay keep it. Oh, so, okay, if having one to one, is good, then they don't work, what's the point, I don't know if that was a part of it but that was that was surprising to see that they had an available.

Student Success and Expectations

Both parents wove a thread of low expectations from their family's schools into their stories. These low expectations could come from a variety of reasons. It could have been from social norms, or from diagnosed disabilities. The parents felt the schools or individual teachers did not push their children academically enough. There were times with Ada when she feared that her child would not be observed.

Ada: It just scared me because I don't want my son to be that one to slip through the cracks, even if something was just small, it can take the smallest thing. And he slips through the crack, and he goes left when he should have went right.

There were times the parents felt the teachers were surprised that the children were able to accomplish tasks or that the children had support at home. While there might have been a variety of differences for a full range of factors, for one of the parents, she felt as if they were not successful because the school created a culture of low expectations.

Tasha: But there's a difference. There's a difference in expectations. And I don't want to I want to blame it on the school or not so much, so I don't think they expected my children to have the support that they did so no one called. (Pausing)

And I was constantly hunting them down.... For my other child, I think it was the same thing, I feel like they just did not expect much from him and didn't ask. I mean I don't know it was weird. I don't know.(Quiet)

Community Focus Group (CFG) Analysis Meeting

The second meeting of the CFG took place after the interviews and analysis phase online utilizing Zoom in the spring of 2023. This focus group was the same invited group from the first community focus group that met in the spring of 2021 with the addition of one of the mothers

from the participating families. Both interviewed families were invited to attend the second CFG meeting.

This meeting provided me with an opportunity to present the analysis, findings, elaborate on the IPA process, and receive feedback. At this meeting, the interview participants were also invited to attend and review the findings and transcripts. The focus of the CFG in this second meeting was on the details surrounding the findings – specifically on the major similarities of the family's cores values and shared classroom experiences. The CFG provided feedback on the value of the IPA process and the benefit of interviews. This meeting provided the CFG a chance to explore some of the major themes and minor subthemes. Committee members displayed enthusiasm for the support that both sets of parents exhibited in their interviews towards their children and were interested in how the schools were able to respond to instruction and classroom management during a time with high COVID restrictions and protocols.

The CFG members expressed interest in many of the extracts from the analysis. In particular they were drawn to the themes focusing on race and disabilities. While some members commented on how familiar they are with these experiences, others shared their concerns. All the members showed interest in understanding how these mother's felt and understood how race and their children's disabilities affected their daily life and educational experiences. The CFG was beneficial at pointing out how the core family values themes were relevant throughout all the interviews. I feel as if they interpreted the core family values of truth and facing fears as foundational for how the parent's responded to their children's lives and experiences. As some of the CFG members were parents to Black children in this county, I feel as if they had a deep understanding to some of the parent quotes and could understand the mother's fear, concerns, and pain. In the closing moments of the CFG the members shared gratitude to the participating

mother for her honesty and to me, as a researcher, for taking on this type of work especially

during a COVID time.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This study focused on interpreting the understandings of parents whose children attended a TZ school and how they felt these experiences affected their lives and communities. Throughout this process what became apparent was that these interviews told a story about families – their values, their hopes, their experiences. In this conclusion, I created interpretive summaries that briefly and concisely use the full range of data I collected to address the research questions, while drawing conclusions from the parent's and researcher's experiences.

I believe this study went from a more focused, somewhat simpler approach to a more complex and diverse study, branching into a variety of directions with the introduction of COVID into the classroom and community. Not only did the effects of COVID affect and alter the methods and procedures for data collecting and interviewing, but the pandemic also re-shaped the experiences of the participants and targeted potential families. Furthermore, in an IPA study, the researcher's views and own perceptions play a role – therefore the researcher's responses and experiences were also affected.

Role of Interpretative Phenological Analysis

Overall, the IPA method guided my decision making on what I found to be the most valuable portions of the interviews. This reveals how an IPA researcher can potentially craft a narrative. For example, during an interview a participant might mention an idea or a thought in one singular moment. The frequency of their response, however, does not necessarily merit

significant value. Likewise, even a short response might be of tremendous value to the participant, the study, or the researcher.

Reflections on Recruitment

As a researcher I found myself exploring and reflecting on the original recruitment practices. I should have created additional workgroups or more targeted community focus groups that would have access to more potential families. While I think COVID played a significant barrier in connecting with families, I think that there were still areas for increasing recruitment. I would have liked to have reached out to the schools or the schools community resources directly. While the study was focused on the parents in the community, I think the schools or teaching staff would have provided me with a larger pool. I should have asked the families that were interviewed to introduce me in-person to other families in the schools. There was a fine line to walk with each participant when requesting more contacts. I wanted to keep the integrity of the study without creating too personal of a relationship with the parents or overreaching by asking for more contacts. I do not believe the door-to-door approach is a successful or necessarily safe method for someone outside of a community.

What worked was building from my previous relationships as a community member. Due to my experiences in the community, serving others, I was able to build trust and a rapport with families. This trust led to the first interview, Ada's interview. I had previously taught Ada's son in a church environment. The role of a teacher, and in a more personal small environment, is meaningful to a parent. A teacher can have influence over a child and support a family in their own capacity. I feel as if this relationship allowed for Ada's responses to be more open and honest than she might have been otherwise. I know my previous relationship allowed me to connect with her prior to the interview and ease any questions and concerns she might have had.

I was also held accountable by Ada, due to our connections in the community. I was responsible for having integrity to maintain not only our trust and relationship, but the relationships we shared in our community. Tasha was a direct recommendation from Ada – they were childhood friends. Ada's trust in me provided an extension of trust with Tasha at the start of our interview, and I felt as if Tasha was quicker to open up and share more personal details then if she did not have a tangential relationship.

The Interviews and Analysis Experience

The interview process consisted of two participants, Ada and Tasha, and prompted them to explore their understanding of how the TZ school change process had any effect on their lives or communities. Throughout the interviews it felt as if the participants gave more honest and insightful information the more time that was spent in the interview. The interviews seemed to progress in stages. There were times in the interviews that the parents would take their own personal experiences and history and try to apply their own thoughts to help the understanding.

Throughout the analysis of the themes, it became an area of interest for how each interview had a different focus on major themes. For example, the interview with Ada goes more into detail on the role of the teacher and parent interactions, while the Tasha interview emphasized themes based more on gender and race. Both sets of themes are valuable and noteworthy, and although the demographics and identities of the participants are similar, their values, solutions, and ideas have differences.

Reflections on the Roles of Power

During the reflections on the interview process, I became aware of the different roles of power and possible power structures that were involved in the research. Initially, as a researcher, I recognized that I had operated from a stance of power, with more knowledge of the school

systems and the TZ. I also had the ability and authority to interpret the findings. Although each participant had the opportunity to review the initial recordings of the transcripts, as well as findings presented at the CFG, there was an implied authority that might have dissuaded the participants from offering suggestions or corrections from the analysis. It is important to provide the participants an opportunity to examine the findings and offer their input. As noted earlier, during the CFG meetings, only one of the participating parents attended, and her feedback felt minimal. As the participant of the study, she might have felt that there was a scrutiny or focus placed on her – she served a different role in the CFG. She might have also felt overwhelmed by some of the members of the CFG and their social standings in her community or their perceived educational or political successes. I was surprised that the only parent participant in the process at the CFG, appeared to have less input than some of the other CFG members. This might stem from the fact that both parents were unaware of the TZ and the role it played at the district level, while several of the group's members were knowledgeable and involved in TZ processes. She might have also had less input due to uncertainty of how her interview might be perceived during a social climate that is focused on many of the issues she discusses openly. However, I also believe she was pleased by the gratitude the CFG members showed to her for her participation in the study and her willingness to come to the meeting and discuss some challenging issues.

Early on, as a researcher designing the interview questions, I had assumed the interviewed families would be generally familiar with the TZ and how their schools were affected by policy changes and regulations. This incorrect assumption revealed a type of educational knowledge and power that I had over the families. This experience created a sense of ethical and practical tension for me during the interviews and the analysis. This tension might have affected how I conducted the remaining portions of the interview, how I expressed

nonverbal communication, and affected the confidence or emotional stability of the family member being interviewed. Although the interview schedule provided flexibility to prompt the participants in key areas and allowed room to follow the lead of the interviewee, the questions were posed with the assumption that the family had some knowledge of the TZ, or that the TZ knowledge was not impetrative to the interview. Upon reflection, this information could have been vital to the interview and forced me to examine possible changes that should have been made to the questions in advance. In future projects and studies, I want to focus more on the knowledge of the families. It would have been helpful to receive this type of feedback in advance from the CFG and would have changed the questions I asked in this study.

Limitations

Interviews and observations could have a variety of limitations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview questions and setting might have created an intrusive feeling, and family participants might not have shared important information. The adult family members could have struggled to articulate their perspectives and their perceived experience. Additionally, as the researcher, I may have had challenges understanding the perspectives of these families and children. I strove to respond to these limitations by providing opportunities for the participants to clarify and expand on areas of the interview questions. I provided the participants opportunities to review the transcripts of their interviews, and created a community advisory focus group that guided me in question development and analysis post interviews.

IPA interviewing techniques used in this study are intended to shape the interactions away from any revelations of sensitive family information and towards discussions of families' experiences both in the homes and in their schools. The participants and researcher could have had difficulty articulating their perspective or recording the results.

As with most research of this nature there is a possibility of research bias and cultural misunderstandings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher was not of the same ethnicity and status as the families interviewed. It might have been difficult to reach this specific population, as I am not a member of their direct community, school, or institutions, and this group might have been reluctant to share with someone outside of their ethnicity or economic status (Shaghaghi et al., 2011). Finally, as a member of the local Church, my prior experiences with the Church may have affected the connections with participants.

As I identify as a Caucasian male, the participants were of a different race, gender, and ethnicity. There could have been cultural expectations, subtext, and norms that I might not have been aware of during the interviews. As part of a majority group, I could have exhibited elements of colorblindness, misunderstandings of privilege and race, and exhibit unintentional bias or microaggressions that can be common with White educators working with African American students and families (Harper et al., 2011; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). Because I have not lived in and experienced urban poverty or experienced racism or discrimination directed at me or my family, I have had to work hard to understand and interpret their understandings of their experiences (Milner, 2015).

One of the strengths that I bring to this research is my strong faith and connections to groups that are actively involved in these communities. I have spent the past twenty years involved in social justice work, teaching in impoverished communities, and studying related and significant issues in higher education. As a community researcher and as a parent, I have spent time in these neighborhoods and schools with these families and with their educators. I had the privilege to supervise new student teachers in local elementary schools and witness the experiences of the students, teachers, and administrators. My heart to care for these communities

using my skills as a community researcher is my greatest strength. It motivates me to create relationships that involve sacrifice and freely giving of time, energy, and financial resources, and compels me to be thoughtful in how I listen, serve, and champion those in these school communities.

Research Questions

1. How did the Transformation Zone (TZ) initiative affect the understandings of families whose children attended these schools?

2. How did children and families attending these schools understand these change processes?

It was surprising there were not a lot of direct responses to the primary questions about how attending a TZ school affects the community or home environment. I believe this could stem from the lack of awareness. All the participants were unaware that they were part of a TZ initiative school. I believe the question design and interview schedule was effective. However, I believe one of the primary reasons there is little data on the initial research questions was simply that the participants were unaware or not knowledgeable of the TZ program. It feels like they are not able to make reflective decisions or informed ideas on how this program might have had effects on their daily lives. This is a major issue for the district, and at least in a very small sample, shows the limits of its ability to educate parents on critical issues connected to their students' schools.

I think in this case it might have been better to either tailor the questions with the knowledge that the participants were unaware of the program or to create a study prior to this study to help educate them on their program allowing them time to reflect and compare other schools and their community experiences. I find value in the process from the data that were

received. Although I did not begin this research with a focus on how COVID might affect

schools and the community or how race might affect education and decision making, these are

clearly areas I was presented with that have larger data points than expected. I will be able to

conduct future research with a much more intentional perspective on such issues. Finding ways

of sensitively investigating parents' knowledge of state and district policies is an ever more

important issue given the many changes in the systems since the pandemic.

Thematic Findings

Topic Theme: Core Family Values

The interview process for both families revealed deep core and foundational beliefs.

These values were used by the parents to steer their children as they developed. It was with these

core family values, these mindsets, that the families participated in their schools, the TZ, and

their communities. At the root of how they interpret the effects of the TZ initiative on their home

and community, they place an emphasis on truth and resilience through failures and adversity.

Their approach to failure is made clear when Tasha remarks:

> And then my fifth grader just getting him to ask questions, to be successful and then for
>
> my second-grader helping her to accept failure, and like actually use it for something
>
> better, like fuel.... We eat failures, we eat them.

> This sentiment is core to how Ada and Tasha approach their school and home life. They

support their children with encouragement and resources, but also expect their children to engage

with their challenges. While there were times that the parents shared that the schools could be

more responsive and communicative, they also stated that in this environment it is their role and

responsibility to actively reframe success and failure.

In the classroom and community, the parents shared how they guide their children to not judge others. It is evident they place value on accepting others, even if they are different.

> Ada: I instill values in him that I believe we might lack in society, to help them grow as a person, is to treat people the way you want to be treated

This except from Ada's interview was a common theme stitched throughout her questions. There were times where she went back to focusing on how her son treats others and how sees himself. I believe her focus on this issue is why this core value is a central tenant of her parenting. She is balancing the task of raising a son to be thoughtful of others while also focusing on his own needs for development.

Researchers has found families face demanding pressures (Bryk, 2010). These pressures can include resources, school choice, and parenting. The parent participants are aware that they need to prepare their children to be resilient and how to approach failure. In these schools, it has been studied that these students focus on not failing at a task rather than redefining success. Therefore, these parents have a desire to guide their children in healthy practices of exploring their motivations and fears (Hsieh et al., 2007).

As seen with Tasha's children, specifically her daughter, there can be struggles with self-confidence and understanding how to respond to her struggles in school (Houston, 1985). In classroom environments that might focus on male student's needs, Tasha's daughter could face additional challenges and learn skills in overcoming adversity and growing in resilience (Houston, 1985). This resiliency is a common thread in these families. Both parents, like the studies of Hampton et al., display strong ties to their core beliefs – they both shared how their values of truth, family, and hard work were essential to their children's upbringing (2010).

Topic Theme: Parent's Perception of Children

The parents in this study often expressed how they wanted to be involved and successful parents – they actively were attentive to details about their children's lives and studied their children's behavior. Throughout the interviews both sets of parents spoke with pride about their children academically and socially. The parents' responses at times had moments where they stated that their children mirrored their own behavior. If the parent was impatient or did not ask a question, they would make a reference how their children also exhibited this trait. The parents observed the changes in their children's personalities and their interfamily dynamics.

> Tasha: I mean because they're also different, they're hilarious, all three collectively I will tell you they're funny children. They're really, really not sweet to each other, but to other people, they're very kind. I'm working on that inner house dynamic thing.

It is not clear how the parents' perception of their children is being affected by being a part of the TZ. There are signs that the parents want their children to succeed and to have a strong desire to understand their children and their children's motivations. Both sets of parents attended the local schools as children, and at times they projected their own historical understandings and interpretations from their own educational experiences. Tasha felt she did not fit in with her own school settings, and like her children, she has a trait of wanting deep knowledge – to ask good questions and be inquisitive. In one moment with Tasha, we get a glimpse of how she feels her child is affected by the type of education that could be associated with a TZ school.

> Tasha: So they all have different problems, so seventh grader is really all over the place, which will turn out to be her gift when she gets older, it just doesn't fit within the school system now, but, like me, she's like me, so I can relate.

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I think it is evident that the parent's view of their children is not harmed by attending a TZ school. Neither set of parents exhibited negative views of their children in the interview. They did not portray a sense of shame, embarrassment, or disgust of their children due to their school environment or attending a TZ school, given the level of vilification low income schools have received from the media. As shown earlier, these are important stages of personal and social growth for children and adolescents – specifically their perception of themselves and how they understand their environment (Wimberly, 2010). I feel that during these interviews that the parent's shared how the role of the family is to support and care for each other is a strength in their community (Logan, 2018), and that supporting their children's education was a priority (Anderson, 1998).

Topic Theme: Significant Challenges

Both parents experienced significant challenges with their children in school, at home, and in their communities. The families all have children who have learning disabilities and identify as Black or African American. This has led the parents to change how they perceive their child's educational plan and treatment methods. Ada took steps to help her son with his ADHD diagnosis. She was able to obtain a 503 plan for her son and spends time helping him and the school with his accommodations.

Ada: That the challenge is ADHD is a, is a big challenge at school and at home but

definitely at school. It is affected his, his self-esteem, self-confidence, self-worth.

Tasha knows that her children are autistic and display autistic characteristics. She feels it is dangerous for a Black boy in her school to behave in an autistic manner. She suggested that such displays are a privilege in society that her children do not receive.

Tasha: As far as my boys with the autism, they say they shouldn't get the behavior (therapy) that they are, because they (teachers) don't want to change them. I was like, that is a luxury for White children – not a luxury for my boys, if they don't get behavior therapy, they'll be dead no matter where we live, no matter how much we have, no matter how much - it doesn't matter.

It is with this mindset that Tasha sends her children to a TZ school. I believe she does not feel supported. She does not feel that her school is taking steps to address her concerns with her children's learning disability, and how race and gender play a role in their education and safety. This was a strong theme for Tasha specifically.

Tasha: And so, it's true, he was, he was having troubles and with his behaviors, but it's, it's huge because he's Black, and White kids do the same stuff he's doing, but it's not a big deal because they're not as threatening as he is, I don't know, like he's kindergarten, how threatening can you be?

Tasha's concern for her children, especially raising a Black boy in this county in this section is clear. She reminds me throughout her interview that her family also mentors and cares for many of the children in her community. Many of these children have fathers or parents who are not present due to incarceration.

Tasha:…Black boys don't do well here.

Interviewer: So, you know I have to ask what do you mean but boys don't do well here?

Tasha: I think the county is a supplier for the jails, because they don't … first of all, there are many of them that don't have their fathers. My son was in in preschool...His dad was like everyone's dad, so he go in and parent, everybody you know that's, that's what he did, because they didn't have any dad's around.

I found this bit of the interview unsettling and frightening that any mother would describe her home through this lens. There is current evidence that highlights the extreme disproportionate amount of Black parents incarcerated in our country and the effects of incarceration on the lives of their families (Bennett et al., 2023). These experiences affect Tasha in her life and in her perception. This is how Tasha said she feels as a mother with children attending TZ schools. There is value in exploring the way a mother says she feels about her children at school – specifically that her children can be racially profiled or not given the same opportunities as White children.

> Tasha: Just a little wakeup call that, although I'm educated, we're not in poverty, that my boy is going to get it too. I've never doubted it.

Tasha is addressing the looming lie that Black people are lazy, uneducated, and at risk because of their own choices forcing them into poverty. As a parent, listening to a parent describe how their children are at risk for being Black and a boy is heartbreaking.

> Tasha: I think I said. But yeah, no, that's all. I have said too much. I hope it, I hope it ends. I would not have my children, my mom is single. So it's just her. I'll have my husband, I would not have them come back here to raise a family, I would have them go somewhere that's more equitable, and for everyone that's involved, not just not just for Black, just for everybody.

These sentiments of sadness and fear are threaded throughout her interview. Her stories paint a picture of a mother wanting her child to feel loved, safe, and educated. Students who identify with Tasha's children as having a learning disability and being a part of a marginalized group, are more likely to face increased levels of discipline which might contribute to the social issues related to school to prison pipeline practices (Henry et al., 2022; Keyes, 2022). The social

view that children who identify as Black or African American are lazy or come from poor and unhealthy families is a lie that has been studied and researched for years. As seen in the work of Hampton et al., African American families possess strong traits for success, and have a deep meaningful family culture. These families tend to have close familial relationships and strong desires for achievement (Hampton et al., 2010; Hill, 2003). These families are subjected to a social and racial lens that many people ascribe to without knowing they are participating in a perpetration of systematic and social dysconscious racism (King, 2016). African American families are living within systems that are systematically designed to diminish their own cultural and racial experiences, while elevating a White standard of race as the correct standard in media, politics, education, housing, employment and society in general (King, 2016)

Topic Theme: Transformation Zone

One of the most important data points is the lack of awareness the parents had concerning the TZ initiative. The parents were unaware that their kids, and the schools they attended were included in the TZ.

Interviewer: Did you know that your school is part of the Transformation Zone Initiative.

Ada: No

She continues on further in her interview by trying to resolve what she might believe what the TZ is at the school.

Interviewer: Okay, so how do you feel about your school being labeled a transformation zone school?

Ada: I don't have a feeling because I'm not quite sure what is a Transformation Zone. If I'm to guess. I can't even guess because transformation can be anything, it's very broad.

Yeah, it's very broad so I wouldn't be able to even guess what it means. I don't have a feeling.

The parents questioned the criteria to being a part of the TZ and made assumptions for why their school was part of the initiative. This became a major point of focus as I progressed through the analysis. There is a struggle to fully answer the research questions, and for the parents to answer the interview questions because they were not aware of the TZ. This lack of awareness extends further than the basic idea of the purpose of the TZ. I believe it is a negative indicator of the educational practices of the district for the parents to be unaware of the change processes surround TZ schools. Ada and Tasha care about their children and their children's education, are involved in their schools, one being a previous teacher, and they are involved in their communities. They should have this type of information, the understanding of the purpose and role of the TZ and yet, they are not being informed. This reveals to me another added layer of power that the school systems have in these relationships and create more distance between the schools and parents through lack of communication and/or incorporating the parents into the schools.

One of the parents felt uncomfortable sending her children to her zoned school because of her previous history and her understanding of the school's reputation in the community. Tasha had a desire to send her children into the more academically successful countywide magnet school programs but did not win a seat into a magnet school.

> Tasha: Yeah, like, okay, so, um, so I'm saying, if I, if I had my choice if I had my money, I wouldn't definitely not put them with this county... because when I first found out I couldn't get them into their magnets. I almost lost my mind that was oh my god, they're gonna be with everyone. It's gonna be crazy, it's gonna be a circus.

The parent's feel that the majority of the student's attending their schools are lower income African American students. They feel as if the TZ initiative does not address the challenge of having segregated classrooms and schools. One of the parents believes that the segregation practices are having a negative affect and believes that the county could do a better job of integration.

Tasha: How did this happen, how did we regress? And it's gonna cost us our community... The problem doesn't lay squarely on the county shoulders, it's systemic, so. But I will tell you if the school county did what the school county could do, it'd be a whole lot better. Even if they could only do what they could do and not deal with everything.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Tasha: Reintegrating the schools.

She clearly believes there is value in integrated schools through bussing county wide to promote positive cultural development and sharing of wealth and resources. It is my understanding of her experience that the TZ schools are not creating a diverse and culturally positive educational experience for her children. She feels that this environment does not help her children excel in society and into adulthood.

Tasha: but if I can get a message to the people who make the changes that would be that you don't know it yet but you're missing out, because we all need each other.

Tasha is clear that her experience in the TZ school is not her preference or that it is an entirely successful educational experience. She feels that she does not have an option currently due to her current life situation. If she had a preference, she would find schools that valued integration. The experience of a lack of school choice, and the feeling that the school systems

were purposefully underfunded and segregated is a common story in this county (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015). This school system, like many areas nationally, has been affected by the lack of integration and the inability of the school system to provide adequate and necessary resources (Kozol, 2005). While educational segregation is an illegal practice, school systems have been affected by the purposeful and unintentional consequences of systematic racism (Katznelson, 2005; King, 2016).

Topic Theme: Teachers and Families

The TZ schools, like most schools, were impacted by the COVID pandemic. The school's choices to open virtually and in a hybrid format affected the learning experience, the family's lives, and subsequently this study.

Tasha: and COVID was so hard, so I have to tell you, I must have. I didn't do too well this year. I expected more flexibility for the teachers.

The parents felt that the effects of the virtual and hybrid style education was harmful to their children educationally and emotionally.

Tasha: Right, so she's talking to the people in her classrooms, and the people on the computer. And so, it's just this constant, angry, yelling feeling just coming, you know, into the ears it was just, and, and had him sitting with me many other days and I just couldn't listen to it anymore. I was like, oh my god, Stop yelling at these kids. It doesn't work.

The opportunity to observe the classroom and teaching online provided insight for the parents. In some cases, the parents witnessed poor behavioral teaching practices, anger from students and staff, and a lack of a healthy learning environment.

There was a range of teaching quality in the TZ schools. There were some teachers who tried to support the children with specific goals, while others were less involved. Ada experienced one teacher celebrating small successes with her son, putting into practice techniques that Ada recommended. Likewise, Tasha's daughter earned an academic award and received praise from her teachers.

At times, teacher and parent relationships were strained. It is unclear if the communication systems and relationships were negative because of COVID or if this was the foundation for a current TZ school. Both sets of parents found value in communicating with their children's teachers. They both had struggles in responses from the teachers and believed for their children to be successful they needed to be consistently pursuing a relationship with the teaching staff and school leadership.

> Tasha: Yeah, it feels that way, it does. But they love them (the kids). They were excited for them, they were trying to motivate them, but they are overwhelmed. And they are not being supported properly.

The parents actively worked to be involved in their schools – joining the PTA, emailing their teachers, and meeting to discuss their child's progress. Although there were times they felt that the teachers were not communicating with them, the parents also had positive interactions during these experiences. Additionally, both sets of parents encountered moments where they felt the schools did not set high expectations for their children. They felt as if their children were not encouraged academically, and this led to them to a feeling of needing to actively communicate and participate in the schools to ensure the success of their children.

This domain is an area where I saw a significant difference in comparison between the interviews and families. While it is my opinion that these two families approach their children's

education in a similar manner – they felt as if they had different teaching experiences. I think this instance might reveal more about the two different schools each family attended, and highlights that even within the TZ program – there is a disparity amongst the schools in staffing, leadership, culture, expectations, and experiences (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015).

Students in such classrooms can feel that the learning experience is more focused on not failing and that the teaching staff has low expectations for these students. The classroom can have scripted lessons due to the turnover of staff and the need to teach students to a standardized test (Kozol, 2005; Liou & Rotheram-Fuller, 2019). As shared in Tasha's family interview, this can lead to some students not receiving the necessary and additional instruction needed for their learning development. Most educators know that students, like Tasha's children, grow and develop at different rates (Kuykendall, 2004). The students can view their work as an endurance test rather than an environment for learning and growth (Bartlinger, 1993). While COVID played a significant role in the classroom management and delivery of instruction, these classrooms had teachers lacking a curriculum in key areas of growth – including the arts and physical education Morgan, 2016).

Conclusions

This study shares the stories and experiences of parents whose children attended a TZ school. Specifically, this study highlights areas that affected these families and their perceptions of these affects. The demonstrated lack of awareness of the TZ, and the role of their schools within the initiative, reveals a primary area of concern. As noted in the school's required reporting (SIP reports), the school's demographics are primarily low-income African American families, creating an ethnically homogenous environment potentially lacking the benefits

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economically and socially that a more diverse and desegregated school might be able to offer their students and families (Kozol, 2005).

These interviews revealed areas of contrast. One family interview placed more emphasis on discussing gender and racial diversity to resolve issues in their school, while the other family interview focused more on the pedagogy and culture of their school. Overall, the families had more shared experiences – including needing additional support with teacher and parent relationships, relating a strong sense of core values, needing more support with student disability services. Both families shared the need of the district to increase awareness and knowledge about the TZ. An unexpected result that came from the study was the effect of COVID on the schools and the families. The study was originally designed prior to COVID, and the effects of COVID socially and educationally might have reshaped many of the results from the interviews.

A proponent to meritocracy might believe that students in American public schools are given equal opportunities. However, from these stories we hear that these parents perceive their children are not being adequately challenged or fully supported in the classroom, and that their educational experiences are not equal to more integrated programs in their county. One of the parents shared she had limited school selection and educational choices. Parents in these schools might feel their only choice is to send their children to a neighborhood TZ school or homeschool if they want a quality and safe educational experience (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015). While the parents expressed that some of the student's experiences were beneficial, the parents also shared that they felt their children had been given low expectations in their educational environment and-- at times-- were racially profiled. These findings relate a complex variety of experiences that are personal to the participants and shape their lives and their communities.

Future Studies

While there might be many areas to focus on for future studies, one of the most valuable next steps should be to expand the sample size for the original study. There is merit in exploring a wider range of interviews, while maintaining the integrity of the IPA methodology. These interviews could be collected from schools in the TZ not represented in this study, as well as a larger sample of parent/guardians. These steps might provide a different set of responses to the research questions and provide validity for current studies.

Additional research could include creating an instrument and questions to explore the experiences of the children and students in the TZ. I would propose a method to capture the children's responses in an age-appropriate practice including drawings or other forms of representation.

There are a variety of studies that could develop from the experiences surrounding COVID and the TZ. In this study there were examples of how the effects of COVID affected family decisions and educational quality. These themes could be further explored for how schools involved in change processes can understand the perceptions of families during interrupted and challenging school years.

Finally, further researchers could examine how the TZ school's families, and their experiences, compare to families that attend schools located in close proximity, but are not a part of the TZ or involved in a current school change process.

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Appendix A: IRB Letter

UNIVERSITY of SOUTH FLORIDA

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

January 29, 2021

████████████

Dear J. Strong:

On 1/28/2021, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

Application Type:	Initial Study
IRB ID:	STUDY001860
Review Type:	Exempt 2
Title:	Family Experiences In Their Community From Transformation Zone Schools During School Change Processes
Funding:	None
Protocol:	• Protocol, Version 1, 1_5_21.docx;

The IRB determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Please note, as per USF policy, once the exempt determination is made, the application is closed in BullsIRB. This does not limit your ability to conduct the research. Any proposed or anticipated change to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB oversight must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant a modification or new application.

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Institutional Review Boards / Research Integrity & Compliance
FWA No. 00001669
University of South Florida / 3702 Spectrum Blvd., Suite 165 / Tampa, FL 33612 / 813-974-5638

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Appendix B: Invite Letter

Hello,

I am conducting research as a doctoral student with the University of South Florida on family experiences in their community from transformation zone schools during school change processes and would like to invite you to participate in a 90- minute interview.

These interviews will consist of pre-determined questions and are intended to gain an understanding of the adult family member's perception of their family's experiences.

All participants will sign a consent form at the site of the interview and given a copy of the transcript. Interviews will take place at the place of your choice: your home, a local public facility, or a church/religious institution. I have several available options. All interviews will be scheduled.

After I collect and analyze the data, I will invite family members to an informal presentation on the data collected, as well as a celebration night.

No identifying information from participants will be used in the analysis. There is not any compensation or reimbursement.

COVID: Everyone involved will need to wear a mask and maintain 6 feet distance for safety. If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact me at jessestrong@usf.edu. Thank you,

Jesse Strong, MLA jessestrong@usf.edu Doctoral Candidate, USF

IRB Study Number: OO1860

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

Title: Family Experiences In Their Community From Transformation Zone Schools During School Change Processes

Study # _____001860_____

Overview: You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this document should help you to decide if you would like to participate. The sections in this Overview provide the basic information about the study. More detailed information is provided in the remainder of the document.

Study Staff: This study is being led by Jesse Strong who is a USF doctoral candidate at USF Tampa. This person is called the Principal Investigator. He is being guided in this research by his doctoral committee, with Dr. Elizabeth Shaunessy-Dedrick serving as the Chairperson. Other approved research staff may act on behalf of the Principal Investigator.

Study Details: This study is being conducted at a location near your neighborhood in a public area of your choosing and is supported/sponsored by USF. The purpose of the study is to study the families perceptions and understandings' of attending a Transformation Zone school during the school change process. I will conduct qualitative research of the families' experiences while their children attended a TZ elementary school. Specifically, the study will consist of a 90 min interview of pre-determined and reviewed questions.

Subjects: You are being asked to take part because you have a child who is attending a transformation zone school.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: We do not know if you will receive any benefit from your participation. There is no cost to participate.] You will not be compensated for your participation. This research is considered minimal risk. Minimal risk means that study risks are the same as the risks you face in daily life.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your study information private and confidential. Anyone with the authority to look at your records must keep them confidential.

Why are you being asked to take part?

You are being asked to take part in this study because you have a child that attends a Transformation Zone School.

Study Procedures:

During the 90 minute interview I will ask you a series of premade questions, that will always be the same for each person I interview. I will use a recording device. After the interview, while I am analyzing the data, I will use a service to transcribe the recordings. You will be provided with a paper copy of your transcribed interview. I will also host an opportunity for your to attend an informal results meeting to hear the study results, and a separate "Celebration Night" at the end of the study. All participants and study members will be following guidelines of wearing a mask and keeping a distance of 6 feet during the interviews.

Total Number of Subjects

About 10 families will take part in this study at USF

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You do not have to participate in this research study.
You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study

Benefits

You will receive no benefit(s) by participating in this research study.

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

COVID: Due to the nature of the study, there is a risk of transmission of the novel coronavirus from these procedures, and that while precautions are being taken we cannot guarantee that the participant will not be exposed to the virus. All participants and study members will be following guidelines of wearing a mask and keeping a distance of 6 feet.

Compensation

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

Costs

It will not cost you anything to take part in the study.

Social-Behavioral Adult Version # 1 Version Date: Jan 5, 2020

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do our best to keep your records private and confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Certain people may need to see your study records. These individuals include:

● The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, and all other research staff

● Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.

● Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP).

● The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, and staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

What if new information becomes available about the study?

During the course of this study, we may find more information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in this study. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, Jesse Strong at (727) 212 – 6943, jessestrong@usf.edu. If you have questions about your rights, complaints, or

issues as a person taking part in this study, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

Social-Behavioral Adult Version # 1 Version Date: Jan 5, 2020

Consent to Take Part in Research

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

_____ Signature of
Person Taking Part in Study Date

_____ Printed Name of
Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent and Research Authorization

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

_____ Signature of
Person Obtaining Informed Consent

_____ Printed Name of
Person Obtaining Informed Consent

_____ Date

Social-Behavioral Adult Version # 1 Version Date: Jan 5, 2020 Page 4 of 4