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CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER: A POST-INTENTIONAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF HOW RESPONSES TO PROBLEMATIC STUDENT BEHAVIOR COME TO BE FOR ELEMENTARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS

A MASTERS THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY
CAROLINE T. BECKER

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

AUGUST 2023

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER: A POST-INTENTIONAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF HOW RESPONSES TO PROBLEMATIC STUDENT BEHAVIOR COME TO BE FOR ELEMENTARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS

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August 15, 2023

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Abstract

"Phenomenological research has, as its ultimate aim, the fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are (van Manen, 1997, p. 12)." Rooted in van Manen's purpose, this study was a post-intentional phenomenological exploration (Vagle, 2018) of how responses to problematic student behavior came to be for Catholic school elementary educators. This study explored the lived experiences and the meaningful connectednesses present when Catholic elementary school educators made decisions about and made sense of their responses to problematic student behavior, and found that teachers' experiences with and responses to problematic behavior in the classroom is a profoundly complicated experience that is not held solely individually and is ever-changing and ever-shifting. Building on themes that emerged from these experiences and the extent to which Catholic social doctrine themes and restorative justice principles do or do not inform teachers' responses to problematic behavior, this study considered how these entangled ideas might give way to lines of flight that invite Catholic educators to consider as they seek to run their classroom in a way that wholly embodies the Catholic tradition. The lines of flight entangled in these research findings suggest ways to lead Catholic education toward a living embodiment of what it means to honor the dignity of the other through true participation and solidarity in pursuit of the common good.

Acknowledgements

While this written work is my own craft, it was, by no means, created by me in isolation. Just as both Catholic Social Teaching and Phenomenology contend, we are social creatures who need each other.

With that, I'm deeply grateful to the following people who have nurtured me and this work:

- To my participants and their school principal – thank you for trusting me with your words and your stories. This study would not have existed without your *fiat.* Your vulnerability is deeply valued and honored, and I hope that comes through in how I've tried to give life to your words.
- To Dr. Lindstrom – thank you for your guidance and your belief in me when I took on a project that was seemingly bigger than me. Your calm and consistent guidance around the twists and turns and over the speedbumps and potholes helped sustain my hope that this whole study would actually come to fruition in a meaningful and scholarly way.
- To Dr. Brady – thank you for spending time over your summer break reading and giving valuable feedback. I'm grateful to you for bringing your knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic education to strengthen this work.
- To my former colleagues and fellow educators who have influenced how I think and encouraged me to show up in my classroom in the most authentic way: Tiffany, Kaitlyn, Wendy, Kiah, Jacque, Tom, Doug, Michael, Kelly, Stacey, Jean, Abby, and Peter.
- To Ross – what started as a glass of wine with a bonfire during Covid-19 turned into an intellectual friendship that I value. Thank you for the alley conversations that encouraged and pushed and challenged me, thank you for loaning me books from your collection, thank you for inviting me to think about what the world is asking of me, and thank you for taking me from a place of not being able to even pronounce the word *phenomenology* to a place of believing in it not only as a methodology but also as a way of being.
- To my parents and my family – don't think I've forgotten all those days I hid in the bedroom at the cabin, made a mess on the kitchen table, said I couldn't do beer Friday because I needed to write, or was generally not social as I sat on the cabin porch reading. Thank you for your patience as I worked and your acknowledgement of how important this was to me. I'm ready for a ride on the pontoon.
- To Edith Stein, St. Theresa Benedicta – It is clear to me that this work came to be because of your persistent and insistent intercession with our Lord. Thank you for modeling how to be an intellectual female, one who balances duty to family while also nurturing your intellectual prowess. I'm deeply grateful for all the times when you held this thesis in your hands because I could not.

Finally, but certainly not lastly, to Our Holy Father - it is clear that You ordained this work, and I attribute it all to your grace and providence. *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*.

Dedication

This work is dedicated all the educators in Catholic schools who are vulnerable and courageous enough to see students as doing the best they can with what they have, and who deeply and unconditionally value their students' voices.

As Pope Francis says in *Fratelli Tutti,*

> In his parable [of the Good Samaritan], Jesus does not offer alternatives; he does not ask what might have happened had the injured man or the one who helped him yielded to anger or a thirst for revenge. Jesus trusts in the best of the human spirit; with this parable, he encourages us to persevere in love (2020, §71).

May we, together, trust in the best of our students and persevere in our deep love of them.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In the K-12 classroom, as a microcosm of society, the United States's retributive justice system is mirrored in traditional discipline practices that generally include punitive or zero-tolerance responses to student rule-breaking behavior (Brent, 2019; Tyner, 2020; Evans & Vaandering, 2016). When a student breaks the rules, there is a punishment or consequence meant to deter the student from further misbehavior, just as threats of imprisonment, fines, tickets, or other penalties are the bedrock of the United States's criminal justice system. Known as the 'school-to-prison pipeline,' (Tyner, 2020; Mallett, 2016a) a result of these practices is the "funneling of students out of school and into the streets and the juvenile correction system (NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., 2022)." To the unfamiliar observer, it might seem a stretch that school discipline policies are linked with later involvement in the criminal justice system; however, the data says otherwise. Punitive or zero-tolerance responses to student behavior are linked with later negative outcomes, including delinquency (Gerlinger et al., 2021), physical aggression (L'Écuyer et al., 2021), not graduating (Fabelo et al., 2011), academic failure (Bleakley & Bleakley, 2019; Kline, 2016) and contact with the juvenile justice system (Fabelo et al., 2011). Furthermore, the data on exclusionary practices for students of color, disabled students, and students qualifying for free and reduced lunch is even more disparate (Kervick et al., 2020; Kline, 2016; Brent, 2019); Mallett (2016b) and Anyon et al. (2018) suggest that that zero-tolerance policies unfairly target these populations, while Tyner (2020) notes that exclusionary practices limit the educational opportunities for these populations. While the intention of these punitive, zero-tolerance responses to rule-breaking behavior in schools is to both encourage compliance by threat of consequence and also deter further problematic behavior, as is similar to the tradition in the retributive criminal justice system, the data begs the

question that perhaps these approaches are doing more harm than good. And, if K-12 classrooms are microcosms of society, it should come as no surprise, then, that in the United Staes, 81% of incarcerated individuals released in 2012 under the age of 24 were arrested again within five years of their release (Durose & Antenangeli, 2021). The school to prison pipeline and recidivism after incarceration for young individuals is a vicious cycle.

As an alternative to punitive and exclusionary practices in criminal justice, restorative justice, based in Indigenous traditions, is a practice that seeks to ask who was hurt and how the harm can be repaired. Instead of using only punitive punishment for breaking the law, restorative justice provides victims and offenders an opportunity to dialogue and come to a greater understanding of the effects of the harm done before providing opportunities for healing (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015; Cross, et al., 2019; Smith, et al., 2015; Zehr, 2002). The mindset for this approach contrasts that of a punitive one because it suggests that crime or harm in any form is a violation of relationships instead of simply a violation of the law; through this lens, incarceration or other punitive consequences are not enough to heal the emotional, spiritual, physical, material, and communal consequences that come from crime or harm (Morneau, 2019; Griffith, 2020). Restorative justice is gaining traction in criminal justice settings around the world, and many have suggested its use as an intervention for student rule-breaking behavior in K-12 settings (see, for example, Tyner, 2020; Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Evans & Vaandering, 2016). Despite there being no definitive definition of restorative justice or restorative practices, no clear process for implementation and measuring fidelity, and a large research to practice gap on both implementation and effectiveness (Skrzypek et al., 2020; Drewery, 2016; Jeznik, et al., 2020; Kervick et al., 2020), schools outside of the United States began implementing restorative justice in the 1990's, and some schools/districts in the United States have come to this intervention over

the last twenty years. Several studies that have examined the effects of restorative justice on suspensions have found encouraging results, suggesting restorative justice interventions might be an effective alternative to suspension and a way to keep kids in school (Gregory et al., 2018; Anyon et al., 2014; Jain et al., 2014; González, 2015; Augustine, et al., 2018; Hashim, et al., 2018). In addition, several studies that have examined the effects of restorative practices beyond suspensions have found positive effects on school culture, staff mindsets, an increase in empathy, an increase in social skills, and positive changes in teacher/student and student/student relationships (Sandwick, et al., 2019; Brown, 2017; Gregory et al., 2016; Anyon et al., 2018; Kehoe, et al., 2018; Reimer, 2020).

More specifically, to date, there has been little to no research on the use of restorative justice in Catholic education. This is of particular importance to Catholic educators for two reasons: (1) because of the Catholic Church's use of restorative justice to help bring healing in the wake of the clergy abuse crisis (Griffith, 2020; Morneau, 2019), and (2) because the guidance of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) suggests a restorative approach to criminal justice is more in line with Catholic Social Teaching than a retributive approach (USCCB, 2016). Though these two things may seem unrelated to K-12 classrooms, the classroom as a microcosm of society is the place where students develop the skills to solve conflicts and build a community of right relationships. Pope Francis (2020, §114 & §112) and Miller (2006) call upon Catholic schools to both nurture a community of believers and teach young students the values and skills required for this lifelong pursuit of God's call. The very mindsets and skills nurtured in elementary school provide the foundation for adults' abilities to resolve conflict, forgive, and foster authentic relationships that collaborate for the common good. It is this call to nurture authentic and right relationships with God, self, and other, according to

the Catechism of the Catholic Church, that is man's highest calling: "[God] calls many to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church" (2012 §1). While a crime in society that warrants imprisonment might be much more significant than a repeatedly disruptive student in an elementary classroom, both are fractures in the thread of the common good; Catholic Social Teaching can inform responses to both, guiding criminal justice leaders and educators alike in how they seek to repair harm and rebuild relationships.

But, perhaps more important than the implementation or use of restorative justice in Catholic education is how Catholic educators perceive behaviors and respond to them in light of Catholic Social Teaching. There is little research on this topic; two studies in the last ten years examined Catholic high school teachers' perceptions and/or responses to student behavior, but only one used the lens of Catholic Social Teaching. In 2014, Mucci examined teachers' perceptions and responses toward classroom behavior, and in 2015, Mucci again examined teacher responses to behavior but this time explicitly asked about the impact of Catholic Social Teaching on their responses to behavior. Though helpful for beginning to integrate Catholic Social Teaching into behavior management in Catholic schools, this body of research is limited to only secondary educators and does not seek to address *how* Catholic Social Teaching might inform teachers' responses to student behavior.

A Culture of Encounter: Research Questions and Rationale for Method

This study sought to bridge this gap in a number of ways. First, this research paper will include a review of current literature in punitive practices, restorative justice, Catholic education, and the integration of restorative practices in education. Second, this paper sought to use a qualitative phenomenological research method to explore the experiences of Catholic elementary

educators when students display what they consider to be problematic behavior, considering the extent to which Catholic Social Teaching and restorative practices are used in the meaning making of these experiences. Finally, this paper used the themes of Catholic social doctrine/Catholic Social Teaching as a theoretical framework for better understanding how Catholic educators' responses to problematic behavior come to be.

The phenomenological research method is appropriate to this research study for a couple reasons. First, because this was a new and understudied topic, the intention of this research was not generalization, but rather to advance the knowledge available for further research; a qualitative method is appropriate for exploring a topic and increasing understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). More specifically, the phenomenological method is appropriate for this study because it aligns with both the purpose and the content of the study. Phenomenological research is the study of lived experiences, or more specifically, the attempt to gain insight into the way one makes sense of experiences (van Manen, 1997). The research endeavor, then, is to uncover meaning by focusing on participants' thoughts, feelings, and memories about a specific experience, respecting the participant's subjective contributions because they are the *experiential experts* (Noon 2018). Rather than the participant offering quantitative data and the researcher being the *expert* on the data, a phenomenological approach, and more specifically a post-intentional phenomenological approach as was be used here, seeks to understand the *meaningful connectednesses* (Vagle, 2018) that exists among socially-produced phenomena (Vagle, 2015). The researcher and the participant are on an even playing field, so to speak, seeking to learn from one another and together grow from the process of reflecting on meaning making. Pope Francis, in his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, makes a call for encounters such as this; the dignity of the human person is rooted in being seen and loved, and a *culture of encounter* in which humans

authentically listen, see, and respect the other are what will "transcend…differences and division" (§215). Rooted in a Catholic worldview, then, the phenomenological researcher has an opportunity to create a *culture of encounter* by holding the experiences and reflections of the participants with reverence, and seek to authentically capture the breadth and beauty of the participants' meaning making.

But how can this research approach contribute positively to education? It is understood that teachers' opinions, perceptions, and philosophies on student behavior inform their responses to said behavior, and Catholic school educators are no different. How they view or think about student behavior affects how they respond to it and exploring these perceptions and the themes within can help researchers better define the ways in which Catholic social doctrine is (or is not) impacting the work educators do in Catholic schools. This is important because "Catholic schools proceed *ex corde Ecclesiae,* from the very heart of the Church" (Miller, 2006, p. vii). Catholic doctrine identifies five 'essential marks' that measure a Catholic school's authenticity according to the teachings of the Church. "A Catholic school should be: (1) inspired by a supernatural vision, (2) founded on Christian anthropology, (3) animated by communication and community, (4) imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout its curriculum, and (5) be sustained by gospel witness" (Miller, 2006, p. 17). These five essential marks and how a Catholic school embodies them in authenticity to Church teaching cannot be measured solely via quantitative means, particularly when one wishes to understand how Church teachings impact teachers' daily decisions. When the experiences and meaningful connections made by teachers are better understood and defined, researchers and educators together can better imbue thoughtfulness and intentional authenticity into Catholic education. Catholic education has the entirety of Catholic social doctrine to influence and guide this thoughtfulness, so this research

paper sought to bring greater authenticity into the work of Catholic educators by helping to define how Catholic social doctrine can inform responses to student behavior (Mucci, 2015). The phenomenological approach here is appropriate, then, because as van Manen (1997) says, "Phenomenological research has, as its ultimate aim, the fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are" (p. 12). There is no more important aim of Catholic education than to help students and teachers become more fully who they are in the image and likeness of God.

To that end, the purpose of this study was to examine how teachers' responses to problematic behavior come to be, considering the ever-shifting nature of problematic behavior and the ever-changing influences in the classroom. Furthermore, in an effort to potentially justify the use of restorative practices in Catholic education, this paper sought to explore what common themes, if any, exist between restorative practices and Catholic social doctrine, and to what extent (if any) these principles influence teacher responses to problematic behavior. This paper sought to answer these research questions:

- How might responses to problematic student behavior come to be for educators in Catholic elementary school classrooms?
- To what extent do Catholic social doctrine themes and restorative justice principles inform teachers' responses to problematic student behavior?

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Explanation of the process and parameters for the literature review search.

To find relevant and recent research related to this thesis, searches of Education Journals, Academic Search Premier, Psychology Database, ERIC, and EBSCO MegaFile were conducted, looking for studies and publications from 2015-2021. The key words that were used in these searches included: restorative justice AND education, restorative practices AND education, restorative justice effects, restorative practices effects, restorative justice implications, restorative practices implications, impact of restorative justice, impact of restorative practices, restorative justice effects on student behavior, restorative justice effects on suspensions, restorative practices effects on student behavior, restorative justice effects on student behavior, teacher experiences of student behavior, teacher experiences AND behavior, teacher experiences AND student behavior, phenomenological AND student behavior AND teacher, phenomenological research AND student behavior, phenomenological AND classroom management, catholic social teaching AND restorative practices, catholic social teaching AND restorative justice, catholic social doctrine AND restorative practices, catholic social doctrine AND restorative justice, catholic social teaching AND student behavior, catholic social doctrine AND student behavior, catholic social teaching AND education, catholic social doctrine AND education, exclusionary practices AND student behavior, exclusionary practices AND catholic, zero tolerance policies AND student behavior, zero tolerance policies AND catholic education, punitive discipline, catholic school discipline, catholic school behavior, catholic education discipline, catholic education behavior, catholic school AND student behavior. When few results were found linking Catholic Social Teaching and restorative practices/justice, the search was widened to the years 2010-2021, and still no results were found. As a further effort to find research, searches for dissertations in

EBSCO Host Open Dissertations, Networked Digital Library of Thesis and Dissertations, and World Cat Dissertations and Theses was done with the following key words: catholic social teaching AND education, catholic social doctrine AND education, catholic social teaching AND restorative justice, catholic social doctrine AND restorative justice, catholic social teaching AND restorative practices, catholic social doctrine AND restorative practices, restorative justice AND catholic education, restorative practices AND catholic education. In another effort to find research relevant to this thesis, an explicit look through the table of contents and abstracts in *Journal of Catholic Education* between the years 2010 and 2021 was done.

A Dearth of Research: Catholic Education and Student Behavior

Problematic student behavior, perhaps defined as behavior that interferes with learning, is a difficult issue for any teacher in the classroom; Catholic education is no different. While many Catholic schools may not have the same severity of student behavior that their public counterparts have (Mucci, 2014), creating a positive learning environment and managing student behaviors is equally an issue in Catholic school classrooms. What public education does not have that Catholic education does, though, is a common governing theology that can guide how educators and Catholic school staff think about teaching, learning, and being in Catholic schools. In the context of the rich teachings of the Catholic Church and the generations of Church documents that might lend a hand to Catholic educators, there is some research into how Catholic Social Teaching principles might inform inclusive education practices in Catholic education (Scanlon 2009; Boyle 2020), but very little research explores student behavior in Catholic education, including how teachers think about and respond to student behavior. Mucci (2014; 2015), are the two most recent studies found.

Mucci's 2014 study sought to address two questions: how students' behavior problems are perceived by teachers, and how teachers respond to students' behavior problems. The grounded theory study, done with secondary Catholic school teachers, found that most research participants perceived common problematic student behaviors (such as disrupting class, swearing, using a cell phone, cheating, sleeping, chewing gum, etc.) as a lack of respect for adults or peers. When responding to these behaviors, Mucci found that teachers most commonly used a combination of responses; teachers used verbal responses (including telling students to stop, asking how they can help, or giving students choices), non-verbal strategies (such as a 'look,' proximity, secret codes with specific kids, or silently taking away unapproved items like cell phones), an exclusionary consequence, or ignoring. In addition to these strategies, Mucci notes that some teachers reflected on what they as the teacher could have changed in the classroom or the situation to lessen the behavior. When Mucci explored what impacts how teachers respond to behaviors, some of the teachers indicated that they had more freedom to use an exclusionary practice (such as kicking a student out of class) and they could be more forthright with their language when telling students to stop problematic behaviors. Contrastingly, Mucci found that teachers' faith also impacts how they think about student behavior; one teacher talked about seeing students as a "child of God" (2014, p. 13) and giving students multiple opportunities to fix issues.

In 2015, Mucci again examined teacher responses to behavior with secondary Catholic school teachers, but this time explicitly asked about the impact of Catholic Social Teaching on their responses to behavior. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB, 2005) identifies seven tenets of Catholic Social Teaching, and Mucci (2015) focused on three of them: dignity of the human person, preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, and seeking the

common good. In Mucci's findings, the first two principles of Catholic Social Teaching (dignity of the human good and preferential option for the poor and vulnerable) influenced teachers' belief in the individualism of the child and her uniqueness; therefore, managing behavior comes through a lens of respect and fairness for the student and manifests itself both in focusing on understanding the cause of the behavior and seeing the student as an individual separate from their behavior. When Mucci explored teachers' thoughts on how the principle of seeking the common good influences their responses to student behavior, there was a shift from an emphasis on the value of the individual student towards more value on the collective classroom; self-described responses from Mucci's participants indicated that "responses to behavior stemmed from more of a concern for the group than the individual student" (Mucci, 2015, p. 20). The results from this study suggest some tension between how the different tenets of Catholic Social Teaching inform teacher responses to behavior. Mucci notes that some of the teacher responses to behavior used in an effort to protect the common good (such as verbally reprimanding a student in front of the class or using an exclusionary practice) may compromise that student's dignity. On the other hand, while this tension was a predominant theme in the study, Mucci also found that some teachers reported strategies that can increase appropriate behavior while protecting both individual dignity and the common good (such as addressing individual academic needs, adapting instruction, using positive feedback, and working to meet individual behavioral needs of students).

Punishment-Based Consequences after Rule Breaking: Introduction to Punitive Practices

Before reviewing literature related to exclusionary discipline practices and restorative justice practices, it is helpful to situate those practices in a larger philosophical framework; the duality of the 'punitive approach' and the 'restorative approach' is never as simple as either/or,

as will be evident throughout this study, but at the same time the literature will reveal a need to exclusively lean into restorative practices in order to get the best outcomes for students (Sandwick, et al., 2019; Gregory et al., 2016; Reimer, 2020). Knowing that many educators dance in the duality of these approaches, the intention here is to define punitive and restorative, including their general philosophies, describe what they might look like in the elementary classroom (as that is the basis for this study), and explore research data on the effects of both practices.

The retributive approach, also known as a punitive approach, can also be termed reactionary, rule-based, or exclusionary; common no-tolerance policies fit under this category. A punitive mindset places the *rule broken* as the primary issue at hand. Students are disciplined based on the behavior that broke a rule, and often with pre-prescribed consequences, such as one detention for three tardies, or being sent to the office for a certain number of classroom disruptions. Punitive and exclusionary practices became more commonplace in the United Staes in the late 20th century on the heels of the 1968 "Drug Free Schools Act." the War on Drugs in the 1980's, and the 1994 "Gun-Free Schools Act" (Mallett, 2016a; Vidal-Castro, 2016; Mallett, 2016b); while these federal acts only provided provision for expulsion for bringing a weapon or drugs to school, subsequent amendments expanded the exclusionary consequences to include infractions for other types of weapons, other substances (tobacco, alcohol), physical fighting, and other non-physical disobedient behaviors (Mallett, 2016a; Mallett, 2016b).

Because this current research is focused on elementary classrooms specifically, a word about how a punitive approach might manifest in these classrooms may be helpful. In the elementary classroom, an example of a punitive system might include a 'clip chart' where each student has their name on a clip and starts the day on 'good,' and when they demonstrate

disruptive or disrespectful behavior, their name gets moved down a level and associated privileges are lost with each level. Another punitive strategy in elementary school is the stoplight cards; each student starts their day on green, and with each infraction they move to yellow, and eventually red, where there is a privilege lost. The commonality between these approaches is that there is a focus on compliance and the response for a variety of problematic behaviors is always the same – the focus is on the rule broken.[1] Common punitive consequences in elementary school are generally unrelated to the problematic behavior (such as losing recess time for not finishing homework or losing *Fun Friday* for disrupting class) and do not offer strategies or skills to help the student demonstrate appropriate behaviors (Kline, 2016). Punitive approaches give out consequences in order to deter future problematic behavior, resting on the belief that disciplining unwanted behavior will encourage wanted behaviors (Wright & Zehr, 2008; Jeznik, et al., 2020; Smith, et al., 2015; Morneau, 2019).

In an emotionally powerful ethnographic immersion study done in southern France in three secondary schools, Garric (2019) sought to explore the mindsets that lead teachers to use exclusionary practices.[2] This study is relevant at this point in the literature review because it helps to frame the foundational mindsets or beliefs held by teachers who use exclusionary practices. Data from interviews and observations during Garric's study found that teachers who kicked students out of class in response to problematic behaviors valued the collective classroom whole over the individual student; they believed students' problematic behavior to be an intentional and deliberate effort to disrupt the class. These teachers indicated that their work as

[1] It is worth nothing here than the clip chart or stoplight system may be combined with less punitive strategies, such as proactive interventions or skill-building strategies; this is an example of the duality of punitive versus restorative never being only either/or. The clip chart and stoplight examples are presented here because they are rule-based, primarily punitive strategies that focus on compliance.

[2] This study was published in French and this researcher used the ProQuest translator to read it in English; ProQuest notes that this was an "on-the-fly translation" and is not intended to replace human translation. This researcher has carefully avoided using any quotes and has sought to capture only main ideas from the study.

educators was for students who *have the desire to learn,* necessitating kicking students out *who cannot or do not want to learn* (Garric, 2019; emphasis not in original). This study clearly articulates punitive teacher mindsets and lends greater understanding to the foundational principles of punitive and exclusionary practices: assuming that students' problematic behaviors are because they do not want to learn, that they have the skills to engage in learning if they wanted to, and that the whole is stronger when "problematic" students are removed (Garric, 2019).

The research on the negative effects of punitive approaches to behavior as they lead to exclusionary discipline practices is profound. Perhaps the strongest example of this is Gerlinger et al.'s (2021) metanalysis synthesizing the research on the relationship between exclusionary practices (including in- and out-of-school suspensions and expulsions) and student delinquent behaviors (including school misconduct, justice system involvement, antisocial behavior, and other risky behaviors). Gerlinger et al. sought out studies published through 2019 using K-12 data from the United States that quantitatively compared rates of exclusionary practices for students or schools and also included measures of delinquent behaviors; the result was 274 effect sizes across forty different studies. In short, Gerlinger et al. found that exclusionary practices are associated with higher rates of delinquent outcomes. More specifically, significantly worse delinquency outcomes were found for schools and students who experienced more exclusionary discipline, and the odds of this were a twofold increase in in delinquent outcomes for each increase in unit of measure of exclusionary discipline; it is difficult to more specifically refine these statements based on the nature of effect sizes for studies being either individual students or schools, and because of the standardization of the unit of measure for exclusionary practices, but the data is still telling: the higher the rate of exclusionary practices, the higher the rate of

delinquent outcomes. In order to further strengthen their results, Gerlinger et al. did an additional analysis of studies that were explicitly longitudinal; they found strong evidence of a causal relationship between exclusionary practices and delinquent outcomes. Gerlinger et al. notes, “As such, there is consistent evidence that removing students from school could have unintentional adverse effects, whereby students who have been excluded from school experience an increase in delinquent behaviors” (2021, p. 1502).

In another quantitative study examining the effects of punitive discipline practices, L'Écuyer et al. (2021) aimed to explore the direction of associations between teacher discipline, students’ acceptance and rejection of peers, and students’ aggressive behavior. This longitudinal study involved 233 kindergarten classes in forty schools in a suburb of Montreal using a variety of data sources, including teacher report of discipline practices, student nomination forms (to measure peer rejection and acceptance), and teacher and parent questionnaires. L'Écuyer et al. found that the use of punitive discipline practices as reported by teachers predicted future peer rejection (i.e., the students that received punitive punishments for behavior were later perceived as less likeable by their peers). However, the stronger association in L'Écuyer et al.’s data was the bidirectional association between punitive discipline and aggression: punitive discipline in the first few months of the school year predicted physical aggression by the end of the year, and physical aggression at the beginning of the school year predicted punitive discipline responses by the end of the year. In this situation, negative begets negative.

Relationship-Based Healing after Harm Done: Introduction to Restorative Justice

> “When a person acts out in a community, he acts as if he has no neighbors.”
> -Chief Justice Emeritus Robert Yazzie, Navajo Nation

Contrastingly, restorative approaches to discipline are more educational in nature, and view problematic behavior in light of the relationship broken, not a rule broken. This approach is

rooted in the traditional restorative justice intervention, which is a formal response to harm or wrongdoing that has been used in several settings for many years. The Navajo peacemaking system, institutionalized in 1982, is an Indigenous form of conflict resolution that brings wrongdoers and victims together along with the community and seeks to dialogue and repair the harm (Zion, 1998; Kervick et al., 2020). The victim/offender dialogue process used in Canada in the 1970's was one of the early uses of restorative justice in a criminal setting (Wachtel, 2013; Evans & Vaandering, 2016), and one of the first extensions of restorative justice into juvenile justice happened in the 1990's when a police officer in Australia used community conferencing to divert juveniles away from court (Wachtel, 2013). Perhaps the most well-known use of restorative justice, though, has been in New Zealand with the native Māori people (Gregory & Clawson, 2016; Evans & Vaandering, 2016); it was first used in the 1980's as a family empowerment process in response to concerns about native children being removed from homes (Wachtel, 2013), and then was applied in the schools after concerns about youth perpetrators dropping out of school (Drewery, 2016; Ryan & Ruddy, 2015; Gregory & Clawson, 2016). While these are examples of formal restorative justice practices, the principles that underline these practices are much older. As Vaandering (2010) notes, the peacemaking circle itself (a core part of restorative justice) is representative of an Indigenous worldview rooted in connectedness and unity, suggesting that because each individual is a vital part of the whole, there is an inherent responsibility or duty towards right relationships (Vaandering, 2010; Cross, et al., 2019; Kervick et al., 2020). Though the exact wording of restorative justice principles may differ based on community or tradition (such as the Māori people's traditional values of reconciliation, reciprocity, and family/community involvement, or the Navajo belief in maintaining harmony or balance in relationships (Cross, et al., 2019; Drewery, 2016; Evans & Vaandering, 2016)),

seminal works in restorative justice suggests three pillars as the tenets of restorative justice: (a) a focus on harm done, (b) the belief that wrongs or harms done result in obligations, and (c) engagement or participation of all parties in healing the harm (Zehr, 2002; Evans & Vaandering, 2016).

From Restorative Justice to Restorative Practices: A Shared Set of Values

Amstutz and Mullet (2005) and Evans and Vaandering (2016) take these tenets further in their application of restorative justice to education settings; Evans and Vaandering note that the core values of restorative justice, including respect, dignity, and mutual concern, are a helpful lens for thinking about how restorative justice tenets could be applied in schools. These core values lend themselves to three equally important concepts for using restorative justice in education: 1) creating just and equitable learning environments, 2) nurturing healthy relationships, and 3) repairing harm and transforming conflict (Brown, 2017; Evans & Vaandering, 2016). The restorative approach to discipline, as compared to the punitive, considers problematic behavior as a skill or need gap; sometimes called the educational approach, a relationship-based approach, or a participatory approach to discipline, this mindset works to teach students skills such as self-regulation, self-management, empathy, conflict resolution, and self-advocacy (Erb & Erb, 2018; Benade, 2015; Smith, et al., 2015). The core values of dignity, respect, and mutual concern lend themselves to processes that, viewing behavior as a skill or need gap, consider the *why* behind an individual's behavior, involve all parties in restoring relationships, and use preventative or proactive measures to nurture community and problem-solving skills (Smith, et al., 2015; Benade, 2015; Drewery, 2016; Cross, et al., 2019). Returning to Garric's (2019) study on teacher mindsets in France, only twelve out of the fifty teachers interviewed valued an inclusive education for all students – this small minority of teachers,

considered the ‘resistance’ against the ‘exclusionary’ teachers, disagree with exclusionary practices and work to both teach tolerance and acceptance and also find educational solutions to keep all students in class. Within the restorative or educational approach, there is equal emphasis on proactive relationship-building and a participatory process to repairing harm done in lieu of exclusionary practices. Restorative consequences, because they are directly related to the harm done, may also be called natural consequences; they seek to ‘fix what’s broken’ instead of punishing for punishment’s sake (Wright & Zehr, 2008). In elementary school, a restorative or educational approach to a recess conflict might be helping two students use structured problem-solving strategies to express what happened, how they were feeling, and how they can fix instead of more punitive approaches such as taking away recess, giving detention, or suspending the students. A restorative or educational approach to classroom disruption may be direct instruction in strategies for self-regulation and prompting a student to identify and ask for what they need in that moment. Restorative approaches in elementary school seek to use natural consequences rooted in skill development to teach students appropriate learning and social behaviors.

Additional clarification is needed regarding the language of *restorative justice* and *restorative practices*. Within the research literature, there are some inconsistencies in how the phrases ‘restorative justice’ and ‘restorative practice’ are defined. Kehoe, et al. (2018) suggest that restorative justice is used only in the context of criminal justice or criminal law, while restorative practices are used in educational contexts where there is no ‘justice’ being sought or served. Sandwick, et al. (2019) suggests that restorative practices or restorative justice practices are the options of interventions educators can use to achieve the goals of restorative justice, while Smith, et al. (2015) suggests that restorative practices are the umbrella and restorative justice is one component of these practices. Seminal works in this area say that restorative

justice, as the practice found in criminal justice or Indigenous traditions, is the context from which education can draw principles or practices that are in alignment with the values of restorative justice (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Evans & Vaandering, 2016). Moving forward in this paper, *restorative justice* will continue to refer to the reactionary intervention used to repair harm (in either criminal justice or in schools), and *restorative practices* will be used as the umbrella term encompassing the variety of interventions or supports used under a restorative approach to school culture and student discipline (including teacher mindsets, proactive relationship building circles, mental health supports, skill-building strategies, problem-solving conversations, healing circles, etc.).

Restorative Practices and Punitive Practices: A Comparison

Before moving onto the effects of restorative practices in schools, two studies of interest can help delineate the differences between punitive and restorative approaches in schools. Philippe et al. (2017) examined written discipline policies for thirty-three different Catholic high schools in the United States, and while the question of punitive/exclusionary practices versus 'positive/educational' practices (as Philippe et al. terms them) was a secondary research question, the findings are of interest here. Philippe et al. found that exclusionary/punitive consequences were far more common in Catholic high school discipline policies than positive responses to behavior, and that a significant majority of discipline policies used expulsion or suspension for a variety of behaviors ranging in severity. It was common for schools to list expulsion as a response to substance abuse offenses or weapons offenses, but many also listed expulsion or suspension as a response to a lower-level behavior that is not threatening to school safety (such as internet misuse, cheating, or failure to serve previous consequences, like detention). Of particular interest here, though, are the discipline policy consequences that

Philippe et al. found to be positive in nature. They included: parent communication, teacher conference, community service, substance abuse intervention, and counseling; while it is clear that these strategies seek to support and help students, there is nothing in Philippe et al.'s data that suggests schools also use practices that are more restorative in nature, such as proactive strategies, direct skill instruction, relationship-based strategies, or problem-solving strategies (though it should be noted that Philippe et al. was specifically examining *behaviors* linked to positive disciplinary practices, not the presence of positive disciplinary responses in school policies).

Also exploring the question of punitive versus restorative approaches to discipline is Jeznik, et al.'s 2020 study in Slovenia that sought to identify which approach was the primarily philosophy behind thirteen different schools' discipline policies and responses to misbehavior. For context, in Slovenia, schools that educate students between the ages of 6 and 15 are required to have an *Educational Plan* that includes school rules and a school-wide approach to discipline; there are few guiding documents at the state level that influence these plans, and generally the schools have complete autonomy in their approaches to education and discipline (Jeznik, et al., 2020). Since the 2009 law that enacted the *Education Plan*, there has been a decade-long disagreement between stakeholders on the "punishment theories," namely what Jeznik, et al. terms a "traditional retributive approach" and a "recent restorative approach" (2020, pp. 106–108). Using focus groups from thirteen different schools, Jeznik, et al. asked teacher participants to discuss a vignette of student misbehavior in order to gauge the philosophy behind their disciplinary approaches. In three of the focus groups, the teachers spoke largely or entirely in a restorative nature, with both their direct comments and the depth of their responses suggesting that they had participated in training in restorative discipline over a long period of time. The ten

remaining focus groups had a combination of restorative and punitive philosophies, but Jeznik, et al. notes that often the restorative approach spoke louder than the punitive approach; nearly all the teachers agreed on needing more time to nurture social and emotional learning, and Jeznik, et al. concluded that "there is a need to systematically introduce a comprehensive restorative framework, both at the theoretical level and through practical programs" (2020, p. 117). Jeznik, et al.'s study suggests that, while punitive discipline practices remain central to teacher mindsets and responses to problematic behavior, there is some momentum behind the possibilities of restorative approaches. After examining the effects of exclusionary practices and the differences between punitive and restorative practices, this literature review turns now to the effects of restorative justice and restorative practices.

A Cursory Glance: The Effects of Restorative Justice on Exclusionary Practices

As they were beginning implementation of restorative justice programs, the Pittsburg Public School District asked the RAND Corporation to do an evaluation on the effectiveness of restorative justice in the district. Though Augustine, et al.'s 2018 RAND Corporation study has not been blindly peer reviewed, it can offer some helpful insights and data to support the use of restorative justice in the classroom. In Augustine et al.'s two-year randomized controlled trial in forty-four schools in the Pittsburg Public School District, the treatment schools implemented a structured restorative practices program and receiving training and implementation support over the two-year study period (2015-2017). Using mixed methods to collect data, Augustine, et al. found that the use of restorative justice in Pittsburg Public Schools resulted in a 16% reduction in school days lost to suspension, and a 13% reduction in the overall number of K-12 suspensions, primarily for non-violent behaviors. The data from Augustine, et al.'s study indicated that suspensions decreased for Black students in the district at a faster pace than white students,

suggesting that the use of restorative justice helped to narrow the racial discipline gap in the district. When considering the suspension data in this study, it is important to note that while Pittsburg Public Schools made a push to reduce suspensions in *all* its schools during the years of this trial (not just the treatment schools), the treatment group schools implementing restorative justice doubled their reduction of suspensions as compared to control group schools (Augustine, et al., 2018).

Hashim et al., in their 2018 study, analyzed twelve years of district data from the Los Angeles United School District, including the years immediately before the district's ban on using suspensions for defiance and nonviolent behaviors, the years after the ban, and the years during and after the implementation of restorative justice in some district schools. When the Los Angeles United School District banned suspensions beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the rate of probability that a student would be suspended dropped 1.1% in the first year, 1.6% in the second year, and .7% in the third year, indicating a slight plateau in the data; then, in the years of and after the implementation of restorative justice in 2014-2015, the probability a student would be suspended dropped 1% (Hashim, et al., 2018). Though this data appears modest, a closer look at (Hashim, et al.'s data indicates that there were greater drops for special education students and male students, and that schools that had targeted restorative justice training and implementation had even greater declines in the probability of suspensions than the control schools.

The Oakland United School District (OUSD) in Oakland, California, began implementing restorative justice in 2005; they started with a whole-school restorative justice approach that included both preventative and reactionary practices for student behavior in just one school, then within nine years OUSD had twenty-four schools participating in its whole-school restorative

justice program and/or the peer mediated restorative justice program. OUSD uses a multi-tier approach to restorative justice in the district. The first tier is a whole school approach to community building at the school and classroom level, which includes relationship building and skill development. The second tier is peer restorative justice, which is a peer-mediated conflict resolution process that includes repairing harms from fights, disruptions, and other hurtful exchanges. The final tier includes reentry work for students coming from the juvenile justice system. Jain et al. (2014) prepared a report for the Office of Civil Rights, United States Department of Education that sought to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the effects of the implementation of restorative practices in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD); specifically using a mixed methods approach, Jain et al. used district data, state educational data, academic data, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and observations to examine the effectiveness of the first two tiers of restorative justice implementation (the whole-school and the peer-mediated components). Baseline data during the initial implementation of restorative practices in the district indicated that students in the middle schools and high schools that were referred for the restorative justice program were three times more likely to be suspended than students in non-restorative justice schools. In the first year of implementation, Jain et al. found that suspensions in the restorative justice schools dropped by 34% for schools implementing whole-school restorative justice, and 13% for schools implementing peer restorative justice, while district-wide suspensions (an average of both treatment and control schools) dropped by 12%. Over the next two years, whole-school restorative justice program suspensions had dropped by 14% in both years, peer restorative justice dropped by 16% in the first year and 18% in the second, and district-wide dropped by 10% and 9% respectively. Schools implementing whole-school and/or peer restorative justice had consistent and significant drops in suspension rates as

compared to district-wide suspension data. When examining staff opinions of restorative justice interventions and implementation, Jain et al. (2014) found that 56% of teachers believed that restorative justice helped reduce suspensions and 44% of teachers believed restorative justice helped reduce office referrals.

When Denver Public Schools (DPS) initially started using restorative justice as an intervention in response to high out-of-school suspension rates in the district, they began first with one middle school trial in 2003 before expanding to a multi-school project in 2006 and developing district-level processes (coordinators, staffing, policies, etc.) in 2007. Shortly thereafter, in 2009 the district reframed the use of restorative justice from a responsive intervention to a proactive strategy for reducing exclusionary practices. Three studies of note examined data related to Denver Public Schools' use of restorative justice during this time. González (2015) did a longitudinal case study using qualitative and quantitative data from DPS between 2003 and 2012 to examine DPS's implementation of restorative justice and its effects in the district. Data used in this study included suspension, attendance, and disciplinary data, surveys/questionnaires, interviews, and observations. From 2006 to 2013, the years in which restorative justice was implemented across the district, González found that suspensions dropped by 5%, with suspensions for white students dropping 3.6% and suspensions for black students dropping 7.2%. In addition to the reduction in suspensions, interviews with staff noted that with the use of restorative justice, the reentry procedures post-suspension became less adversarial in nature and instead became more focused on resolving conflict and repairing harm (González, 2015).

In 2014, using Denver Public School district data for the 2011-2012 school year (including office referrals, suspension data, law enforcement referrals, and expulsion data),

Anyon et al. (2014) sought to explore whether alternative approaches to behavior problems protected students from later out-of-school suspensions or expulsions. During the 2011-2012 school year, 12% of students received at least one office discipline referral; of these students, 46% received one or more out-of-school suspension, 37% received one or more in-school-suspension, 7% participated in a restorative intervention, 5% were referred to law enforcement, 4% were put on a behavior contract, and .7% were expelled. Anyon et al. used regression models to estimate relations between risk and protective factors and thus explore which responses to office referrals were most likely to later result in an out-of-school suspension. Examining office referrals for behaviors (including destruction of property, defiance, bullying, detrimental behavior, first and third degree assault, substance possession, possession or use of a dangerous weapon, or other code of conduct violation), Anyon et al. found that the odds of an out-of-school suspension were higher for students who were placed on behavior contracts, who were referred to law enforcement, or who attended a school with a higher population of Black or Latino students. Exclusionary practices such as out-of-school suspension, law enforcement referral, and expulsion were found to be used in response to all behaviors listed, though weapons, substance possession, and assault had significantly greater use of these practices than other behaviors. For students who participated in in-school-suspension or a restorative justice intervention, their chance of an out of school suspension or expulsion was lower. Somewhat unrelated to the direct research questions in this current paper, but also important to note, is that Anyon et al. found that Black, Latino, and multiracial students received exclusionary punishments at a rate greater than their white or Asian peers; the more significant the consequence (law enforcement referral or expulsion), the more race became a protective factor for white and Asian students.

Gregory et al. (2018) attempted to duplicate Anyon et al.'s (2014) findings using the same district data but during a different school year, seeking to explore the factors associated with equitable (or inequitable) assignment of out-of-school suspension. The primary research question in Gregory et al.'s study is not of direct interest to this present literature review, but the secondary findings are. In the 2014-2015 school year, Gregory et al. found that 40% of students who had multiple office disciplinary referrals had one or more out-of-school suspension, 32% had one or more in-school-suspension, 26% participated in a voluntary restorative justice intervention, 5% were put on behavior contracts, 5% were referred for law enforcement, and .7% were expelled. This data is similar to Anyon et al.'s (2014) data, except for the increase in the use of restorative justice interventions, the decrease in the use of suspensions, and an increase in the use of behavior contracts. Gregory et al. (2018) found that for students who were put on behavior contracts, the likelihood of a later out-of-school suspension increased by 29% (relative to students who received discipline referrals but never received a restorative justice intervention or in-school-suspension). For students who participated in in-school suspension, the likelihood of a later out-of-school suspension decreased by 85%. For students who participated in a restorative justice intervention, the likelihood of a later out-of-school suspension decreased by 35%. This data held for students with multiple referrals and for students with all severity of referrals (such as classroom disruption versus physical aggression). While Gregory et al.'s research is correlational and cannot claim that restorative justice interventions directly affect out-of-school suspension rates, their study and Anyon et al.'s (2014) study both present strong evidence that keeping students in school and strengthening problem solving and relationships via restorative justice can increase student time in the classroom by helping districts reduce out-of-school exclusionary practices.

The research to support restorative justice's effects on exclusionary practices is strong. Yet, in the context of these studies, reactionary restorative justice interventions are *meant* to reduce suspensions; in the previous studies, most districts had, in addition to implementing restorative justice, made calls to intentionally reduce student suspensions district wide. So, in an attempt to more explicitly link restorative practices (both proactive and reactive interventions) with decreasing exclusionary practices, Gregory et al. (2016) examined the rate of office referrals as compared to students' opinions of teacher implementation of restorative practices (including proactive community building, collaborative problem solving, and reactive interventions to address harm). In their study of two high schools on the east coast of the United States, Gregory et al. asked if higher implementation of restorative practices *as reported by students* corresponded to less frequent use of disciplinary office referrals for misconduct/defiance. Both high schools initially implemented restorative practices during the 2010-2011 school year, and Gregory et al. did their study the following year, after one year of working with the intervention. Using student surveys, teacher surveys, and office referral data, Gregory et al. found that teachers with higher use of restorative practices as reported by students had fewer office referrals for misconduct and defiance; this factors in both students' opinions of implementation and their experiences of restorative practices, not simply teacher reports of implementation. In addition, the teachers who had higher implementation of restorative practices were deemed more respectful and better listeners in the opinions of students (Gregory et al., 2016).

A similar study done by Acosta et al. (2019) found that students who reported a higher exposure to restorative practices also reported more positive outcomes (including better relationships with adults and peers, and less physical bullying and cyberbullying). While Acosta

et al.'s two-year randomized control trial of the same restorative practices program as Augustine, et al.'s (2018) trial with Pittsburg Public Schools did not find evidence that the specific restorative justice intervention increased positive outcomes, Acosta et al. (2019) did conclude that amongst staff members who demonstrated an increased and consistent use of restorative practices, student reports indicated positive results in the areas of relationships and decreased bullying. It is helpful to note that Acosta et al. also acknowledges the difficulties of implementing a wide-ranging restorative justice intervention in several schools over only two years, and that the larger control trial study will actually continue for an additional three years (Acosta et al., 2016). The results of the larger five-year study were not yet available for review at the time of this research paper.

Given the studies the studies that support restorative justice's effects on decreasing exclusionary practices (Gregory et al., 2018; Anyon et al., 2014; Jain et al., 2014; González, 2015; Augustine, et al., 2018; Hashim, et al., 2018), it is clear that the research is positive towards the use of restorative justice and restorative practices in schools when examined in light of its effects on exclusionary practices and office referrals. As Reimer (2020) notes, the effects of restorative practices on behavioral change can be examined through exclusionary practices data, but this data does not tell the story of how restorative practices can contribute to a school community in which the "individual and collective thrive (Reimer, 2020, p. 423)." Given the restorative justice value of creating community in relationships and the importance of the individual within in the community, it is important to explore what the research says on the effects of restorative practices on student behavior, school culture, and relationships.

Going Further: The Effects of Restorative Practices on Relationships and School Culture

As a good starting point, in 2019, New York City (NYC) schools had one of the biggest district-wide rollouts of restorative practices in the United States, working to implement restorative practices in all middle and high schools. Sandwick, et al.'s 2019 research study included five schools serving 6-12th grades that had a student population representative of those who are disparately impacted by exclusionary practices. The two questions Sandwick, et al. sought to answer relevant to this research paper include examining what restorative practices/approaches were used to foster a positive school-wide culture, and examining student/staff/family perceptions of restorative practices in relation to safety, discipline, and culture. Sandwick, et al.'s findings tell the story of a culture shift within the NYC schools, built upon both restorative justice as a reactive intervention and also restorative practices as a proactive strategy for community-building. Some of the practices found to be most deeply engrained in affecting the school culture include community building circles, restorative conversations about conflicts, staff-led mediations, group or individual counseling, and student leadership in restorative practices (Sandwick, et al., 2019). Staff at each school noted the importance of being flexible in creating a child- or situation-specific restorative response from a variety of options of practices, rather than having a scripted if-this-then-this response to behavior. In their results from stakeholder interviews and focus groups, Sandwick, et al. found that a shift in the culture through the use of restorative practices yielded increased empathy, relationships, and accountability throughout the school; furthermore, staff felt that their non-punitive responses to behavior minimized the collateral consequences of disciplinary responses, better addressed the underlying causes of student behavior, and nurtured a process of learning from mistakes.

The previously mentioned Jain et. al (2014) study on the effects of restorative justice on suspensions in the Oakland United School District (OUSD) has some additional data that is helpful here. When examining staff opinions of restorative practices, Jain et al. found that 63% of teachers believed restorative justice helped improve conflict resolution between students/students and students/staff, 69% of staff members reported a positive impact on school culture, and 64% reported improved relationships between teachers and students. In a follow-up study using the same data, Brown (2017) dug deeper to explore what the data said about the use of dialogue in restorative practices interventions in OUSD schools. Brown found that more than 90% of surveyed participants in the OUSD restorative justice schools felt that students, teachers, administration, and parents were able to dialogue and listen better because of the restorative justice work. Interviews with teachers indicated that they felt they have a stronger voice in their schools, and 50% of students interviewed in a focus group feel they are more heard by teachers and staff because of restorative practices; more specifically, the students felt that the circles practice provided good opportunities for communication and expression (Brown, 2017). It is helpful to note that while only 50% of students interviewed felt this way, it was a small sample size of only eight students; two students did not answer the question, and two said they do not feel heard because their previously voiced concerns about specific uniform-related rules had not been adequately addressed by administration.

Short, Case, & McKenzie takes this question of the effects of restorative practices on relationships further in their 2018 study on the long-term impacts of restorative practices on student and staff relationships. As previously mentioned, building relationships is a foundational component to restorative practices because healthy and authentic relationships are necessary for skill building, conflict resolution, and repairing harm (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Evans &

Vaandering, 2016). Using themes from teacher interviews in a secondary school in northeast England, Short, Case, & McKenzie (2018) found that after five years, staff believed that that the implementation of whole-school restorative practices had positively affected staff/student and student/student relationships. A primary theme from the interviews was the importance of seeing problematic behaviors as learning opportunities and using restorative practices to shape social relationships; staff felt that this restorative approach, coupled with giving students voice through a fair process of repairing harm, ultimately created an environment that was more physically and emotionally 'safe' for students and teachers (Short, Case, & McKenzie, 2018).

Anyon et al. (2018) echoes the importance of student and staff relationships in a phenomenological study with 148 staff members in the Denver Public School district after the implementation of restorative practices; specifically, Anyon et al. sought to identify the discipline strategies that were used in the district's lowest-suspending schools, but the results indicated no single strategy or intervention. When Anyon et al. asked teachers, staff, and administrators to tell their narratives about interventions and strategies that they find essential in efforts to reduce exclusionary practices, participants overwhelmingly believed that building relationships with students and families was an essential component to reducing exclusionary practices. Staff interviewed in this study noted that these relationships are foundational for problem solving in moments of conflict; they suggested that when relationships are grounded in the teacher's knowledge of the student as a human (both in and out of school), then staff are better able to identify and address the root cause of the behavior rather than simply discipline the behavior itself. Both staff and students had participation and understanding in moments of conflict, and, as Anyon et al. noted, "[these] relationships…transformed discipline processes

from one-sided administrative practices to opportunities for personal growth" (2018, pp. 227–228).

In a previously mentioned study, Augustine et. al (2016), in their survey of staff members in the Pittsburg Public School District, found that staff did not believe implementation of restorative practices had an impact on student behavior, but did believe that implementation yielded more positive staff-student and student-peer relationships. Reimer (2019) stresses that "students' schooling experiences are mediated and defined almost entirely through and within relationships" (p. 22), suggesting that relationships are pivotal for student success, both academically and socially, and should be of the utmost importance for educators. This perspective was the springboard for Reimer's 2020 deeper dive into the data from Reimer's 2019 study done in Canada and Scotland. The 2019 study will be discussed in depth in the next section of this literature review, but what is pertinent now is that Reimer's 2020 study sought to better understand the importance of relationships by looking at the lived experiences of students and how school experiences (including relationships, policies, and systemic practices) contributed to students' sense of well-being, sense of joy, and sense of belonging. Reimer (2020) found that students' experiences with school-wide restorative practices had several positive outcomes, including strong, positive, and trusting relationships rooted in adults valuing students' voices, an understanding of conflict as a normal part of existence, and skills to solve conflicts collaboratively and authentically. Kehoe, et al. also address the power of restorative practices on relationships and problem-solving skills in their 2018 study that sought to explore both student and teacher experiences of restorative practices and their opinions on its impact on student behavior. Using a high school in Australia with four years of restorative practices implementation, Kehoe, et al. found that both students and teachers noted a positive increase in

students' social skills, as well as a positive impact on personal relationships (both student-peer and student-teacher) and overall school culture. Teachers felt that students had gained better perspective-taking skills and empathy through the circles process. In addition, teachers and students felt that the whole-school implementation of restorative practices had positively impacted the school-wide sense of community. Kehoe, et al.'s data contributes to the theory that restorative practices are effective at meaningfully managing student behavior and teaching behavioral skills when the practices are interweaved throughout the school day (such as proactive circles to build community, valuing student voices, and reframing problematic behavior as a skill to be taught), not just as reactive responses to behavior.

Given the positive research on the effects of restorative practices on relationships, exclusionary practices, empathy, and problem-solving skills, one might wonder the hurdle or the hold-up to full scale implementation of restorative practices in all of education. Besides the issues of training, funding, staffing, and a lack of standardized ways to implement restorative practices, there are two pervasive issues: teacher/staff mindsets and punitive systems (at the school and district level). The difference in teacher mindsets was articulated in Garric's 2019 study in southern France that explored teachers' punitive mindsets and in Jeznik, et al.'s 2020 study in Slovenia that sought to uncover teacher discipline philosophies in individual schools. These studies have given this literature review a brief look at the clash of mindsets that can happen in a school, and this clash, along with attempting to implement restorative approaches within punitive systems, as will be seen in the next section, may be the biggest hurdles to full-scale implementation of restorative practices in schools.

A Clash of Worlds: Restorative Interventions in Punitive Systems

For a strong example of the nuanced differentiation between punitive and restorative mindsets, a return to Reimer (2019) is helpful. This study examined two schools, one in Canada and one in Scotland, and sought to better understand the adult intentions and student perceptions of the use of restorative practices. Both schools were middle level schools (between grades 6 and 8) and both had at least five years of staff training and use of restorative practices. Reimer explains two different implementations of restorative justice in schools; first, using it as a reactionary intervention to address isolated incidents of harm and for the purposes of changing student behavior, and second, using it as proactive opportunity for students and teachers to develop relationships and give students voice in order to bring about more equity in systems and practices. Scotland first started restorative justice interventions in 2004, and the school in Reimer's study used restorative justice as a reactionary intervention within a punitive system, and as Reimer notes, the punitive consequences were implemented when students did not change their behavior after a restorative justice intervention had taken place. Canada has been using restorative justice practices in schools since the 1990's, and the school in Reimer's study was using proactive restorative practices coupled with a program that emphasized increasing student voice, student engagement, and systemic equity. Reimer's 2019 findings suggested that both schools benefited from the use of restorative practices, but a closer look suggests that the whole-school proactive and reactive program implemented in Canada had more meaningful results than those in Scotland. Interviews with teachers and students from the Scotland school suggested that restorative justice, placed within a punitive-based school-wide system, was used to help students understand how their behavior made teachers feel and how it affected the learning environment. The implications from this practice were named in student interviews when they expressed that

while they felt there were trusting relationships with staff, students were not sure their voice mattered because they did not feel that teachers empathized with them or attempted to understand the conflicts before being quick to blame. In contrast, student and teacher input in the Canada study indicated that restorative practices helped students understand their mistakes, how they affected the school environment, and how to repair the harm; both teachers and students felt they had a voice, and they felt they had stronger relationships because of those voices (Reimer, 2019).

Brent (2019) provides another narrative that echoes the clash of restorative and punitive philosophies by seeking to explore the "resilience of engrained punitive dispositions" (p. 97) amongst teachers and staff in the midst of external pressure to increase equitable approaches to student discipline. The study was a four-year ethnographic study of a large suburban school on the east coast of the United States that had been previously cited by the state for inequitable discipline practices. The school was attempting to implement a clearer behavioral policy alongside restorative interventions, such as using non-punitive responses to behavior, direct skill-building, and increased mental health supports. Brent (2019) notes that the most prominent theme that came from the study was that staff believed restorative-related discipline reforms in the school had 'softened' the disciplinary code and did little to 'punish' students for misbehavior. The more restorative approach to responding to misbehavior was in direct conflict with what Brent calls 'enduring dispositions' amongst the staff; most staff felt that the 'softer' discipline code undermined their authority as teachers and that the reforms being implemented did little to help students get ready for the 'real world.' In addition, staff felt that there were few resources to help with proactive restorative approaches because the time needed for relationship building and skill building is frequently lost to managing the punitive school system (such as addressing office

referrals during the school day, hosting detentions, and supervising in-school suspensions). Perhaps most telling, though, is that despite some declining disciplinary data for the high school, Brent (2019) found that the reforms implemented did not bring more equality to discipline practices for Black youth, students on free and reduced price lunch, and special education students; these groups still received exclusionary practices at an inequitable rate. Brent (2019) notes that while a number of research participants were in favor of more restorative-based practices, the data suggested that the 'enduring disposition' of punitive mindsets will hinder restorative reforms that are not implemented with a shift in staff mindsets, resources for full implementation, and when a punitive system remains the core discipline structure.

Perhaps the best example of the difficulty in using restorative practices without shifting staff mindsets is found in King Lund et al.'s 2021 study titled, "Mindsets Matter." King Lund et al. considered two different data sets: data that sought to identify the mindsets of middle school teachers during a school-wide three-year implementation of restorative practices, and data from an examination of the effects of restorative practices on discipline referrals over three years for a subset of youth with high frequencies of discipline referrals. During the three-year implementation of restorative practices, the southeast United States middle school in this study focused on training staff in the implementation of proactive relationship-building circles and reactive restorative conversations. Using a survey and individual interviews, King Lund et al. examined staff mindsets at the beginning and the end of year three, and also conducted fidelity checks of proactive circles to ensure the implementation of restorative practices. Results from the surveys indicated that over the course of the school year, staff did not have an overall shift in mindset towards a restorative approach; in fact, statistically significant data indicated a shift

away from a belief in the collaborative problem-solving component of restorative practices. King Lund et al. concluded,

> Even though the school had officially adopted the RJP [restorative justice practices] model, provided professional development, and implemented consistent daily morning proactive restorative circles, our data suggest this *systematic* change did not lead to an *internalized* [emphasis in original] change within teacher beliefs overall. If teacher beliefs do not align to the ideological principles of restorative justice, implementation is unlikely, including opportunities for positive discipline, self-management, and conflict resolution. These key components of SEL [social emotional learning] are necessary within the classroom and school's culture, and so teachers must foster them to ensure that RJP can be effective. Moreover, when schools do not implement these practices as designed and teachers continue to adopt and apply traditional discipline beliefs and practices, inequitable discipline will likely ensue. (2021, p. 20)

King Lund et al.'s other data set that tracked fifteen 'highflyer' students with multiple detentions and suspensions over the three years found exactly that; findings indicated a statistically significant increase in discipline referrals from year one to year three of the implementation for those 'highflyer' students.

Two final studies worth noting come from Queensland, Australia, and touch on the difficulty with implementing restorative practices in the context of school-wide positive behavior supports. Queensland has a strong history of restorative justice interventions with youth, dating back to the 1960's in community settings and the 1900's in school settings (Bleakley & Bleakley, 2019; Hepburn & Poed, 2021). In the early 2000's restorative justice was combined with a new Positive Behavior for Learning (PBL) model; PBL focuses on proactive preventing of

behaviors by establishing clear expectations alongside clear, predictable, and consistent consequences (Bleakley & Bleakley, 2019), and emphasizes direct teaching, opportunities to practice, and positive reinforcement of student behaviors (Hepburn & Poed, 2021). The PBL model in Queensland, similar to Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in the United States, is a data-driven model that assists teachers and administrators in reinforcing positive behaviors and designing support plans to respond to problematic student behavior; however, in reflecting on the use of the PBL model in Queensland, Bleakley and Bleakley argues that the PBL approach to "[d]ata-driven behavior management can often result in school administrators looking at a student's entire disciplinary record when making determinations about how to punish them for isolated incidences" (2019, p. 542). In Bleakley and Bleakley's analysis of discipline data across Queensland from 2006 to 2016, they found a 47% increase in the number of suspensions and expulsions. While this data does not take into consideration multiple suspensions for individual students, it is still significant. During the last four years of the study (2012-2016), the largest practice that increased was short term suspensions (less than ten days), while long term suspensions dramatically decreased, and expulsions remained relatively stable. Bleakley and Bleakley found that between 2006, when Queensland added the data driven component to PBL, and 2011, expulsions of students more than doubled, going up at a rate of 122%, despite the PBL framework and the continued use of restorative justice. As a limitation to their study, Bleakley and Bleakley (2019) cannot directly attribute the rise in exclusionary practices during 2006-2011 or 2012-2016 directly to the implementation of PBL or the data tracking system; however, they conclude that "[i]t could be suggested, thus, that the rising rate of exclusion can be attributed directly to the aggregation of behavior management data on students, and the philosophical perspective that removing 'problem students' was the best

way to manage student conduct on a whole-school level" (p. 544). In the conclusion of their study, Bleakley and Bleakley suggest that the data driven approach to managing the PBL model contributes to 'tracking' of students and labeling them as 'deviant,' and this very label, when coupled with not giving students the chance to heal relationships and reconcile with the community, "inevitably shapes the self-perception of its students and contributes to the internalization of a deviant identity that can manifest in increasingly overt expressions of deviant behavior" (2019, p. 547). In a rebuttal to Bleakley and Bleakley's study, Hepburn & Poed (2021) acknowledged that while Queensland's use of exclusionary practices is of concern, there was no causal evidence that it was the data tracking or PBL that prompted the increases in suspensions and expulsions. Furthermore, Hepburn & Poed note that PBL is compatible with restorative practices (including restorative circles, proactive relationship-building, teaching skills, repairing harm, etc.), but that there has been inconsistent implementation of both PBL and restorative justice throughout Queensland. Despite the disagreements between Bleakley and Bleakley (2019) and Hepburn & Poed (2021), any rise in exclusionary practices and inconsistent implementation of what should be positive support systems for students is cause for concern.

While programs like the United States's Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS) or Queensland's Positive Behavior for Learning (PBL) are evidence-based and are rooted in proactive prevention and teaching of positive behaviors, Kline (2016) notes that these systems often contain some sort of punitive nature. In addition, as was seen in Bleakley and Bleakley (2019) and Hepburn & Poed (2021) in Queensland, King Lund et al.'s (2021) study "Mindsets Matter," Reimer's (2019) results from Scotland, and Brent (2019), the 'enduring dispositions' of punitive approaches, coupled with inconsistencies in implementation of restorative practices, and

the presence of zero-tolerance policies within PBIS or PBL means that these systems may still be perpetuating the negative effects of exclusionary practices (Kline, 2016; Schiff, 2018).

A Summary: Moving Forward with Mindsets

While further research is needed on the relationship between school-wide positive behavior support systems, restorative practices, and exclusionary discipline, it is clear amongst the research that restorative practices hold promise for changing outcomes for students. If schools can reduce exclusionary practices and increase positive culture and relationships, this may challenge the school to prison pipeline (Tyner, 2020); perhaps the most powerful way to do this is through the "transformative power of relationships" (Tyner, 2020, p. 69). Restorative justice interventions, rooted in repairing harm and restoring relationships, can be a strategy to reduce exclusionary practices (Gregory et al., 2018; Anyon et al., 2014; Anyon et al., 2014; González, 2015; Augustine, et al., 2018; Hashim, et al., 2018), but restorative practices, more broadly than restorative justice, can strengthen relationships, strengthen school culture, and build student social and conflict resolution skills (Sandwick, et al.; Brown, 2017; Gregory et al., 2016; Anyon et al., 2018; Short, Case, & McKenzie, 2018; Kehoe, et al., 2018; Anyon et al., 2014). Pivotal to this, as learned from the studies on the conflict of restorative practices in punitive settings (Garric, 2019; Jeznik, et al., 2020; Brent, 2019; King Lund et al., 2021) and those that examined the success of whole-school implementation of restorative practices (Sandwick, et al., 2019; Reimer, 2020), is the criticalness of the shift in teacher mindsets and whole-school involvement in restorative practices. Situated here, in the critical component of teacher mindsets, is the current study on how Catholic elementary school teachers' responses to problematic behaviors come to be. Bracketed by both restorative practices principles and Catholic social doctrine principles, this study will move forward with a post-intentional phenomenological

methodology that acknowledges the ever-shifting and ever-changing influences, relationships, and mindsets that inform teachers' responses to problematic student behavior.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Post-Intentional Phenomenology

Phenomenology, though it is many things (a philosophy, a theory, an approach to psychology) was the research method used here. Phenomenology as a philosophy originated with Edmund Husserl in the late nineteenth century as a response to both the empirical sciences and also a challenge to the Cartesian dualism (Vagle, 2018; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Husserl defended the idea of a *lifeworld*, bringing back together what Descartes had split: man and the world (Vagle, 2018; Vagle, 2015; van Manen, 1997; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The *lifeworld* is the interconnectedness between self and context (ideas, concepts, things, others), and the work of phenomenological research, then, is situated not in validating, explaining, or generalizing, but contemplating the ways these things manifest in order to better understand the world as it is lived (van Manen, 1997; Goble, 2021; Vagle, 2018). Phenomenological philosophy, theories, and methods all posit that the human cannot be removed from the world and are interested in researching the phenomena and the resulting interconnectedness, or *intentionality*.

Intentionality, phenomenologically speaking, does not mean to 'be intentional' or do purposeful actions, as the generally accepted English definition suggests, instead intentionality is, in the words of Merleau-Ponty,

> …that which produces the natural and antepredicative unity of the world and our life, being apparent in our desires, our evaluations, and in the landscape we see, more clearly than in objective knowledge, and furnishing the text which our knowledge tries to translate into precise language. (1962, p. xviii)

Elsewhere, Merleau-Ponty more simply refers to intentionality as "the thread that binds" (1968, p. 173), while Vagle (2018) refers to it as "the meaningful connectedness with the world" (p.

129), and Sartre (1970) situates intentionality as a "burst towards" the world (p. 5). In the context of this study, intentionality is conceptualized with the post-structural concept of *lines of flight*; Vagle, in his post-intentional phenomenological method, "entangles" (p. 38) post-structural concepts with phenomenological concepts, and *lines of flight* is one of the concepts he uses. Taken from Deleuze and Guattari's 1987 book *a thousand plateaus,* originally published in French, Vagle explains that a *line of flight*, as used post-structurally, is not to be confused with the English translation of 'fuite' as flying, instead it is meant to represent concepts such as fleeing, flowing, swelling, or taking off (2018, p. 128–129). Intentionality, in this sense, is not fixed but is unstable and ever-changing; given this, then, it is the researcher's task to acknowledge that she is stepping into the middle of these ever-shifting intentionalities and thus begin to untangle how those very connectednesses came to be (Vagle, 2018; Clifden & Vagle, 2021). With that, through the post-intentional phenomenological lens, the phenomenon itself is not merely a lived experience to be described or interpreted; instead, it is both an individual experience and also a 'social apparatus' that is ever-becoming and ever-changing in social contexts (Vagle, 2018, p. 140; Clifden & Vagle, 2021).

Vagle's use of 'post' in his post-intentional phenomenology is not meant to mean *after* or *behind* as the prefix often implies, nor is it meant to be a rejection or opposition to phenomenology or intentionality. Instead, Vagle's use of *post* with the hyphen is meant to represent its connection with poststructuralism (Vagle, 2018; Vagle, 2015; Clifden & Vagle, 2021). Vagle's departure from more traditional phenomenology is found primarily in how he 'posts' both the phenomenon and the intentionality, as was previously described. Vagle's post-intentional phenomenology "aims to serve as a space in which post- ideas and phenomenological ideas can be *put together* to see what happens" (2018, p. 124), and it is precisely his use of the

post-structural concept of lines of flight coupled with phenomenology's intentionality that so beautifully captures both the profoundly complicated experience of responding to problematic behavior in the classroom as well as what educators might learn from it. In more traditional phenomenological methodologies, the research might seek to describe the *essence* of the lived experience (such as a description of the lived experience of responding to problematic behavior and the corresponding intentionalities), or it might seek to better understand the essence through the meanings present in the interpretation of the lived experience. While these approaches acknowledge the fundamental phenomenological idea of the lifeworld and work to study the world as it is lived, neither goes as far as post-intentional phenomenology does to acknowledge that lived experiences are socially produced and not experienced on a solely individual level, which is certainly true about teachers' responses to problematic student behavior; the intentionalities, or meaningful connectednesses, present in responses to problematic behavior are unstable and are ever "producing and provoking" (Vagle, 2018, p. 32). Educators' experiences with problematic behavior and the corresponding responses are not static; a teacher's emotional, physical, mental, and social response to problematic behavior might depend on how much sleep she had the night before, the opinion of the child's parents or the teacher's colleagues, the teacher's philosophy of behavior, the school discipline policies, etc. The phenomena of responding to problematic behavior is, using Vagle's (2018) words, one that "seeks to flee through and across different contexts of disorienting dilemmas" (p. 47). With that, this research paper is oriented towards gaining an understanding of the meaningful connectednesses present when teachers respond to problematic behavior and how teachers' responses come to be among unstable and shifting relationships by answering the following questions:

- How might responses to problematic student behavior come to be for educators in Catholic elementary school classrooms?
- To what extent do Catholic social doctrine themes and restorative justice principles inform teachers' responses to problematic student behavior?

Research Design[3]

In his book *Crafting Phenomenological Research,* Vagle (2018) outlines components he recommends in doing post-intentional phenomenological research; those components, as related to the research design, will be outlined and elaborated upon here in order to propose the design for this study. In addition, some components from van Manen's 1997 *Researching Lived Experience* will be used in the research design.

1. Identify a post-intentional phenomenon in context(s), around a social issue.

The first component of Vagle's framework includes many things that have already been done in this paper, including stating the phenomenological problem (see the methodology), reviewing the literature, and identifying research questions (see the introduction). A couple other components, including thinking with theory, considering social change, and participant selection have not yet been addressed. The frame for this research has been preemptively set in the introduction, in the literature review, and in the description of this methodological approach; however, a few more words are warranted as so as to gain an understanding of this question as a social issue in the surrounding contexts. Recalling the words of van Manen (1997), "Phenomenological research has, as its ultimate aim, the fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are" (p. 12). In the context of Catholic education, the high calling of Catholic schools warrants a deep understanding of how Catholic doctrine speaks to the practical

[3] The Research Design section of this thesis retains what was originally proposed for the research study. Any changes to this proposal that were required during the actual data collection are outlined in the Findings chapter.

parts of education and how educators are influenced by Catholic doctrine (if at all) (Mucci, 2015). This research sought to address both. As will be discussed below, this research study was interested in using Catholic social doctrine as a theoretical framework for understanding the influence of Catholic teaching on educators' responses to problematic behavior; in addition, this paper was interested in linking the foundational themes in Catholic social doctrine with the values and tenets of restorative practices. As found in the literature review, punitive discipline practices can have detrimental effects on students, and restorative practices as an alternative hold great potential for reducing exclusionary practices, nurturing relationships, and building school culture. A successful effort to link the principles of Catholic social doctrine with the values of restorative practices may provide a lit path for Catholic educators to begin (or resume or continue or redirect) their journey towards making their responses to problematic behavior more authentic to the principles of Catholic teaching, and thus work towards the ever-present social issue of improving outcomes for students.

This study proposed to use 6-8 elementary (K-5) classroom teacher participants from one Catholic school local to the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. It was initially considered to do two schools, but upon further reflection into the data gathering methods, it was determined that this research would focus on teachers from one school in order to better manage the amount of data gathered. Using specialist area teachers (such as music or PE) was also considered, as was using information from administrators or other school staff, but considering the elementary classroom as a microcosm of society, the researcher determined it would be important to focus on the classroom as a community and how classroom teachers considered this in their responses to behavior. In addition, the researcher considered using 6-8th grade teachers, but since there is no research on Catholic elementary school student behavior or teachers' experiences with student

behavior (in contrast to a few studies at the secondary level), it was deemed important to situate the study in that research gap. These factors are all noted as limitations in the final chapter.

In order to gain access to a local school, the researcher used personal connections (via former administrators or colleagues, or acquaintances from the Catholic community) and a letter that both introduced the research and the researcher to a local principal. The initial proposal was that once a principal accepted, a survey would be used to gather data on potential participants. This survey asked questions that include grade level taught, number of years in the classroom, age, gender, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, willingness to participate in the data gathering methods, etc. From the results of this survey, a minimum of 6 participants and a maximum of 8 were to be picked for participation. If there were fewer than 6 participants who are willing to help with the research, use of a second school could be considered; however, given phenomenology's focus on lived experiences and not generalization of data, a small number of willing and involved participants can still be an effective group of participants for the study at hand. If a small number of participants is used, the researcher could have also considered duplicating opportunities for data collection (such as doing two follow up interviews instead of one). Participants were offered a small gift card as a token of appreciation for their time, and if requested, a brief summary of the findings was provided for participations.

2. ***Devise a Clear Yet Flexible Process for Gathering Phenomenological Material Appropriate for the Phenomenon Under Investigation***

In order to align data gathering with the ever-changing and evolving phenomena at hand, this researcher proposed three components for gathering phenomenological data. First, to begin to understand how teachers respond to problematic behaviors, a semi-structured focus group with all research participants was to be held. After this conversation, participants were to be invited to

write a Lived Experience Description following van Manen's (1997) framework. More specifically, this would invite participants to write a description of what it is like to respond to problematic behavior by describing both the external event (what happened, when, where, etc.) and internal events (feelings, moods, emotions), while avoiding causal explanations. van Manen adds additional suggestions for participants writing Lived Experience Descriptions, including using an experience that is vivid in their memory, and then attending to that experience through feelings in their body. Clear instructions and a sample Lived Experience Description (not relating to classroom behavior) was provided as guidance for participants. Finally, the third component to data gathering in this study will be an invitation for writers to participate in a one-on-one hermeneutical reflection (van Manen, 1997); taking the shape of a semi-structured interview, this conversation was to occur after the participant and the researcher both had time to read, process, and explore the Lived Experience Description (likely about two weeks' time). As van Manen says, "The insight into the essence of a phenomenon involves a process of reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience" (1997, p. 77). Given the post-intentional nature of the phenomenon at hand, and in an effort to better understand the ever-shifting and changing intentionalities present, the follow-up hermeneutical conversation had two purposes. First, it sought to answer the research question about how Catholic social doctrine and restorative practices concepts influence teacher responses to behavior, if at all. Then, the hermeneutical conversation sought to dig deeper into the question of how teacher responses to problematic behavior come to be by exploring the intentionalities present among unstable and shifting relationships and contexts. The focus groups and one-on-one hermeneutical conversations were to be recorded and transcribed (in addition to notes taken during the interview), and communication about and submission of the Lived Experience

Descriptions was to be done via email. No observations in classrooms or of students were made and none of the research proposed was to be disruptive to the school or school day setting. The researcher acknowledged that conversations about problematic student behavior and teachers' personal experiences may be difficult for some teachers, and the researcher intended to follow the lead of the participants and give the space needed to manage those difficulties (such as taking a break from the interviews, suspending interviews, or continuing at a later date). Figure 1: *Research Questions and Related Data Sources* provides a breakdown of which data sources will contribute to which research question.

Research Question	Supportive Data Sources
How might responses to problematic student behavior come to be for educators in Catholic elementary school classrooms?	Focus Group Conversation Lived Experience Descriptions Follow-Up Hermeneutical Conversation Post-Reflexions Journal (see below)
To what extent do Catholic social doctrine and restorative justice principles inform teachers' responses to problematic student behavior?	Focus Group Conversation Lived Experience Descriptions Post-Reflexions Journal (see below) Follow-Up Hermeneutical Conversation

Figure 1: Research Questions and Related Data Sources

3. Make a Post-Reflexion Plan

Vagle's post-reflexions are an "outgrowth" of phenomenology's bracketing (2018, p. 153) and are similar to subjectivity statements commonly found in qualitative research. Both Vagle (2018) and van Manen (1997) acknowledge, that while phenomenological *bracketing* requires the researcher to set aside prior beliefs and knowings about the research data, this is nearly impossible to do and is not entirely necessary. Of particular relevance to this thesis, van Manen suggests that maintaining a pedagogical lens when doing educational or pedagogical research is critical for the relevancy and the praxis. Therefore, as Vagle says, collection of post-reflexions before, during, and after the research process can be helpful for exploring how the various

orientations of the researcher engage with the phenomenon; to that end, this researcher used a post-reflexion journal and crafted an "initial post-reflexion statement" (2018, p. 155) in order to better examine what frames her personal beliefs and perspectives. The post-reflexions journal was continued throughout and after data collection, and was to be a combination of field notes, reflections, and encounters with the data. Vagle recommends researchers reflect on moments when they connect or disconnect with the data, moments they are shocked by the data, their "assumptions of normality," and the "bottom lines" of beliefs and opinions that are unable to be shed (2018, p. 154).

4. ***Explore the Post-Intentional Phenomenon Using Theory, Phenomenological Material, and Post-Reflexions***

It is at this point that Vagle (2018) begins to discuss the analysis of data gathered. Using Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) *lines of flight* previously mentioned, Vagle (2018) recommends that the researcher use a whole-part-whole approach to analyzing both participant data and post-reflexion data; the lines of flight encourage one to look at inconsistencies and consider where the data might be *taking off* through those inconsistencies, and what can be learned when those paths of *taking off* might be followed. Vagle provides several questions to help the researcher follow these lines of flight, suggesting that it is helpful to challenge binary thinking, identify certainties and uncertainties, and lean into risks when one finds oneself backing off into safer territory. Needing more structure for the whole-part-whole approach, this researcher also proposed to use the steps suggested by van Manen (1997), which include examining lived experience data by first looking for the main significance in the text as a whole, then looking for selective phrases that are revealing or insightful, and finally going line-by-line to explore what sentences or statements each contribute to the understanding. In following the same plan for reflecting on

post-reflexion data, Valge reminds the researcher than this process is “iterative and entangled” (Vagle, 2018, p. 159) and that the flexibility provided by the lines of flight is critical.

Vagle, in discussing how to think with theory, does not mean the chosen theory(ies) will or can dictate what can or cannot be said in a final analysis, instead, the theories are to be used as a “generative act” (2018, p. 143), because knowledge and understanding post-intentionally is always fleeting and ever-changing (Vagle, 2018; Clifden & Vagle, 2021). The underlying phenomenological theories in this study value the educator as the expert, and see the phenomenological process as part of Pope Francis’s “culture of encounter” (2020, §215). In addition to this, Catholic social teaching is proposed here as grounding theory that is both foundational for connecting the Catholic faith with the everyday work of Catholic school teachers and also critical for evaluating behaviors responses as they reflect Catholic teaching. A more thorough description of this theoretical framework is provided here.

Thinking with Theory: Catholic Social Teaching. The social teachings of the Catholic Church were used as part of the conceptual framework for this study. The author is a practicing Catholic and is influenced by the social teachings of the Church; this worldview has been influential in both the author’s personal life and teaching philosophies, and this can contribute bias in interpreting and discussing results of this study. In addition, because this study sought to research the links between the Catholic Church’s social teachings and educational interventions that are restorative in nature, using the Church’s social doctrine as a framework helps to lay a solid foundation for interpreting and discussing results. In order to better situate this framework and give clarity to readers unfamiliar with Catholic social doctrine, an explanation of research procedures, citation procedures, and a concise description of the Catholic Church’s social doctrine is provided here.

For the purposes of researching Catholic social doctrine for this paper, three seminal works were consulted to gain a grasp of which particular encyclicals, addresses, and statements might be consulted and be most beneficial to this paper's objective. The seminal works consulted were the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004), *The Social Agenda* (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2000), and the entries in the edited volume *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations, Second Edition* (Ed. Kenneth R. Himes, 2018). Since the American Psychological Society's *Publication Manual, Seventh Edition* does not offer explicit instructions for citing Church documents, a note is provided here for clarification. When referencing encyclicals, papal letters, or papal addresses, this paper will cite the author and the year, and when conciliar documents, papal instructions, or congregational bishops' statements are cited, this paper will cite with the council or congregation and the year. In both instances, for out-of-sentence citations, the title *Pope* will be dropped and only the adopted papal name will be used (i.e., *Benedict XVI* instead of *Pope Benedict XVI*), and for all citations of Church doctrine the paragraph or section number of the document will be provided (using the symbol §) for clarity and ease of reference. Full references (including online access when available) for every document can be found in the reference list under either the adopted papal name or the council/congregation name.

Catholic Social Teaching, a common phrase heard when discussing the Catholic Church's teachings on social matters, is an accepted common name for the social doctrine of the Catholic Church. The Church's social doctrine is not comprised of a list of action items, rules, or a particular canon of writings, but is instead a rich expression of how God's love for the world manifests itself by way of guiding people's behavior (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §73). The Church's social doctrine is derived from a variety of sources, a weaving together

of scripture, reason, tradition, and experience. The foundation of Catholic Social Teaching is first in the Hebrew and Christian Biblical tradition, and has been discerned, articulated, and applied to contemporary issues by Catholic popes, doctors of the church, bishops, and church scholars (Gaillardetz, 2018; Donahue, 2018). As an example, perhaps one of the greatest known Church doctors was St. Thomas Aquinas, whose writings contributed to Catholic Social Teaching's core values through his work on natural law and justice. For the purposes of this thesis, though, the majority of sources used will be papal writings, coupled with some elements of Hebrew tradition and Biblical influence. The first papal source to explicitly address issues of social justice was Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum (On Capital and Labor).* An encyclical is a papal letter in the tradition of the letters of the first apostles; modern day encyclicals are doctrinal works addressed to the faithful of the Church and are intended for instruction of all Catholics. Most encyclicals use a combination of Biblical tradition, previous papal writing, and philosophy to apply Church teaching to contemporary issues, thus providing guidance for local bishops and laity to apply Church teaching to their unique circumstances. For example, Pope Francis's 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* uses the parable of the Good Samaritan from the Bible, the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium,* and the Second Vatican Council's *Gaudium et Spes* to implore that Christian love transcends prejudice, racism, and both visible and invisible borders. Other sources of the Church's social doctrine are papal addresses and letters (such as the Christmas messages of Pope Pius XII), conciliar documents (such as documents resulting from the Second Vatican Council, including *Gaudium et Spes*) and documents from pontifical councils (such as the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace's 2004 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*). Finally, Catholic Social Teaching can also be promulgated by local bishops conference's statements (such as the United States Council of Catholic Bishop's 2016 statement

Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration), and from documents of apostolic instruction (such as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's 1986 *Libertatis Conscientia*). With each new letter and statement, the Church's social doctrine continues to grow and build upon itself, and when taken together, provides its leaders and laity with principles and criteria for discernment of what is just and right (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §7). Despite the broad canon available for understanding and acting in line with Catholic Social Teaching, the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes* (1965a) acknowledges that the Church does not have ready answers to every question, and that discernment on the part of church leaders and laity must include the "light of revelation" and "experience of humanity" in order to use Christian faith for guidance on contemporary issues (Gaillardetz, 2018; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §33).[4]

Finally, a word about the use of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and terminology. The Church's social doctrine is intended to be international in nature, and Catholic Social Teaching takes on different interpretations by individual conferences of Catholic bishops around the world. Each conference of bishops discerns the most prudent way to implement Catholic Social Teaching based on the social needs of their population and region; for instance, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has set seven principal themes related to social issues in the US while the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference has eleven themes. As another example, neither the South African Council of Catholic Bishops nor the Catholic Bishops Conference of India identifies set themes but instead has a mandate on how justice and

[4] Author's Note: Considering *Gaudium et Spes'* call for the faithful to apply their Christian faith to contemporary issues (§33) and *Libertatis Conscientia's* (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's 1986 document under Pope John Paul II) caution against laity formulating church teaching (§69–70), this author wishes to note that this thesis is not an intention to formulate Church teaching; instead, it is a research activity aiming to synthesize the Church's social doctrine, scholarly research, and the experience of Catholic educators. The conclusions and findings are for continued discussion only and are not to be interpreted as formulations of Church teaching.

peace are to be promoted in local dioceses in light of Catholic Social Teaching. With this, it is important to note that the "continuity" of Catholic social doctrine (Compendium 85) means that the core values of the Church's social doctrine (described below) are not dependent on or changed by cultures or ideologies, rather they honor the situations and experiences present in everyday life and society. Practically, even though this author is writing from and researching in the United States, it is not the intention of this thesis to be unique to the Catholic Social Teaching themes provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; instead, the intention is to look at the themes found in the entirety of Catholic social doctrine, not just the USCCB's principles for action. Additionally, moving forward, this paper will use the phrase *Catholic social doctrine* to reference the social teachings of the Catholic Church instead of the phrase *Catholic Social Teaching*. Because of this thesis's research foundation in education/pedagogy and because many readers will be unaware of the fact that Catholic Social Teaching is not direct canonical instruction related to educational pedagogy, this shift in verbiage will distinguish Catholic social doctrine as not related to any pedagogical approach. Finally, following the lead of Vatican documents (specifically the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*), *Catholic social doctrine* as a phrase will not be capitalized because it is not a proper title, instead it is a descriptor of a set of theological social principles.

Foundation and Principles of Catholic Social Doctrine.

"God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27)

"What is man that you are mindful of him, and a son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him little less than a god, crowned him with glory and honor." (Psalm 8:5-6)

Catholic Social Teaching has its roots here, in these fundamental Catholic truths: that God so loved humanity that He created men and women in His own image and likeness, and by

extension, then, humans have inherent dignity and worth. (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §105 & §107; McKinney, 2019). If man is created as imagined by God and as a reflection of God's love, he is thus called to be in full communion with God. St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, writes, "For those [God] foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son…And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30). The Catholic Church teaches that because man is willed (foreknown) and created *by* God *in* the image of God (predestined), he is thus called to full communion with God's son, Christ Jesus. While man can never achieve perfection as Christ himself is perfect, full communion means that man "acknowledges [God's] love and commits himself to his Creator" (Second Vatican Council, 1965a, §19) in all he says and does during his time on Earth. The Church's role, then, is to promote the earthly conditions for the authentic manifestation of God's love for humankind. The Church places the dignity of man as a willed and created being at the crux of all Her social doctrine because of the critical nature of man's work towards salvation; humans are called to salvation because they are willed and created by God, and because God desires full communion as an authentic manifestation of His love for creation. "The Church shows her concern for human life in society, aware that the quality of social life…depends in a decisive manner on the protection and promotion of the human person" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §81). Throughout the many documents that comprise the Catholic Church's social doctrine, nearly every one that addresses contemporary social issues calls to attention first the dignity of the human being as its foundation for social justice and action. From this starting point, then the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace,

2004) identifies three additional principles through which the dignity of man is realized: the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity.

"The principle of the common good, to which every aspect of social life must be related if it is to attain its fullest meaning, stems from the dignity, unity, and equality of all people" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §164). The Second Vatican Council further explains that the common good is, "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as a group or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily" (Second Vatican Council, 1965a, §26). Pursuit of the common good means actively seeking to nurture and support the development of humans, not only ensuring that all individuals have access to necessities they need, but also building social structures and systems that are respectful of the dignity of all individuals and groups, regardless of age, race, gender, ethnicity, etc. In addition, as Pope Francis notes, pursuit of the common good includes human development (2020, §112); humans are tasked with passing on the skills and moral values that are necessary for creating a common good that manifests God's love on earth, thus fostering opportunities for all children of God to be in full communion with God.

> The principle of subsidiarity realizes the dignity of the person by,
>
> Showing concern for the family, groups, associations, [and] local territorial realities; in short, for that aggregate of economic, social, cultural, sport-oriented, recreational, professional, and political expressions to which people spontaneously give life and which make it possible for them to achieve effective social growth. (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §185)

The Church makes it clear that subsidiarity is a delicate balance between powers of authority and individuals; neither should be expected to do what is the job of the other, nor should either take

away the job of the other. A distinguishing characteristic of subsidiarity is the concept of participation, about which the Second Vatican Council says,

> [Participation] is expressed essentially in a series of activities by means of which the citizen, either as an individual or in association with others, whether directly or through representation, contributes to the cultural, economic, political, and social life of the civil community to which he belongs. (1965a, §75)

Participation, as a characteristic of subsidiarity, calls on the Catholic individual to have an active voice in their decision making with a lens for the common good. Through participation, humans can advocate, problem solve, and work towards a common good that allows *all* to have a voice in their pursuit of right relationship with God, self, and other.

The principle of solidarity acknowledges the deeply social nature of humans, and the equality and rights humans have to pursue right relationship with the other; it, "expresses in summary fashion the need to recognize the composite ties that unite men and social groups among themselves, the space given to human freedom for common growth in which all share and in in which they participate" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §194). This is a call to all humans to fight, advocate, and work towards the common good of all individuals because the call to have a right relationship with one's other implies that humans are inherently responsible for one another (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004); this responsibility is rooted in love, and as a manifestation of God's love on Earth, calls humans to both meet the immediate needs of one's neighbor in poverty (such as clothes, food, shelter), and at the same time "strive to organize and structure society so that one's neighbor will not find himself in poverty…" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §208). Solidarity is a dual responsibility to both ensure the dignity and meet the needs of the poor and vulnerable, and also

work towards systematic change that realizes the dignity of all through respecting the subsidiarity and right to participation of all humans in a quest for achieving the common good (Benedict, 2009 §11; Francis, 2020, §116).

In terms of how this theory might be applied to problematic student behavior and teachers' responses to behavior, there are several lines of flight that might be explored. The principles of the dignity of the human and the common good might inform teachers' responses to behavior, just as solidarity may provide insight into the ways in which intentionalities influence teachers' responses. The concept of participation might contribute to all having a voice in repairing harm done, while subsidiarity can perhaps influence systems or structures that confine responses to problematic behavior. As Pope Francis notes, "the values of freedom, mutual respect, and solidarity can be handled from a tender age" (2020, §114), and the responsibility of educators (along with parents and the community as a whole) is not only academic, but also moral, spiritual, and social. Examining the themes found in teachers' experiences with problematic behavior is necessary if Catholic education is to become more fully itself by becoming more true to the Church's teachings, and if it truly seeks to respect the dignity of all persons through a pursuit of the common good. The principles of Catholic social doctrine provide a theory that can do just that.

5. *Craft a Text that Engages the Productions and Provocations of the Post-Intentional Phenomenon in Context(s), around a Social Issue*

Here, in the final writing of the research results and discussion, Vagle (2018) emphasizes the consideration of *productions* and *provocations*. A production might be considered something that "signifies the ongoing ways in which the phenomena is being shaped over time" (Vagle, 2018, p. 160), so in the study at hand this might be considering contexts or intentionalities that

maintain teachers' responses to problematic behavior, such as behavior change in students, affirmations from colleagues, school discipline policies, or personal histories with discipline. Provocations, then, might be thought about as "catalyst[s]" (Vagle, 2018, p. 160), or things that are igniting, disrupting, or influencing how the phenomenon might change over time, such as influential stakeholders or policymakers, shifting or changing philosophies about behavior, experiences with students, deepening understandings about contributors to behavior, etc. While the final product of a phenomenological study can never capture the fullness or completeness of a lived experience or phenomenon, a written text that is oriented to the phenomenon, and is strong, rich, and deep (van Manen, 1997) can bring a reader into dialogue with the findings. Both van Manen and Vagle (2018) consider writing and rewriting as a way of thinking, engaging, and being with the gathered data.

Summary

The methodological approach provided here as was proposal for this research is based on a post-intentional research design that is framed by phenomenological and Catholic social theories. A review of literature has situated the research study by identifying gaps and supporting studies. This study proposed to use a qualitative data gathering method and method of analysis in order to examine the research questions in a deep, meaningful, and flexible way. Next, this paper will review how the research methodology came to be in practicality and will review the qualitative findings in light of the proposed theory.

Chapter Four: Findings

Bracketed by principles from both restorative practices and Catholic social doctrine, this study used a post-intentional phenomenological methodology that acknowledges the ever-shifting and ever-changing influences, relationships, and mindsets that inform teachers' responses to problematic student behavior. Vagle's (2018) post-intentional phenomenology "aims to serve as a space in which post- ideas and phenomenological ideas can be *put together* to see what happens," (p. 124) and it is precisely Vagle's use of the post-structural concept of lines of flight coupled with phenomenology's intentionality that so beautifully captures the profoundly complicated experience of responding to problematic behavior in the classroom. Post-intentional phenomenology also acknowledges that the lived experience of educators is socially produced (not experienced on a solely individual level) and that intentionalities present in teacher responses to problematic behavior are unstable and are ever "producing and provoking" (Vagle, 2018, p. 32). With that, this research paper is oriented towards gaining an understanding of the intentionalities present when teachers respond to problematic behavior and how teachers' responses come to be among unstable and shifting relationships by answering the following research questions:

- How might responses to problematic student behavior come to be for educators in Catholic elementary school classrooms?
- To what extent do Catholic social doctrine themes and restorative justice principles inform teachers' responses to problematic student behavior?

Research Design

In order to answer these research questions, the post-intentional phenomenological research approach was used to gather lived experience data from two elementary Catholic school teachers. This study initially proposed to use six to eight elementary (K-5) classroom teacher participants from one Catholic school, but after difficulties recruiting participants, the study moved ahead with only two teachers; given the in-depth nature of this study and phenomenology's focus on lived experiences and not generalization of data, a small number of willing and involved participants is noted as a limitation but still considered an effective group of participants for the study at hand. Using specialist area teachers (such as music or PE) was also considered, as was using information from administrators or other school staff, but considering the elementary classroom as a microcosm of society, it was determined that it would be important to focus on the classroom as a community and how classroom teachers considered this in their responses to behavior. Given the smaller sample, the researcher also considered duplicating opportunities for data collection (such as doing two follow up interviews instead of one), but given the difficulty in recruiting participants, the researcher simplified the participant obligations. In order to gain access to a local school, the researcher used personal connections (via former administrators, colleagues, or acquaintances from the Catholic community) and a letter that introduced the research and the researcher to a local principal. Once the school principal accepted the proposal, a survey was used to gather data on potential participants (see Appendix C). This survey asked questions that included grade level taught, number of years in the classroom, age, gender, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, and willingness to participate in the data-gathering methods. Two potential participants filled out the survey, and both were picked for participation. Both participants completed a consent form (see Appendix Four), and

upon completion of their participation, participants were offered a small gift card as a token of appreciation for their time.

Justine and Olivia were the two research participants (their names were changed for confidentiality purposes); both white, female, and practicing Catholics, they are teachers at a Catholic school in a metropolitan area in the Midwest United States. Justine has been in the classroom for less than 10 years and teaches in a lower elementary classroom (K-3), while Olivia has been teaching for 25+ years and is an upper elementary classroom teacher (4-6). Due to the small size of the school and research sample, more specific information about years and grades taught and additional identifiable information is being omitted to protect the confidentiality of the research participants.

First, Olivia and Justine were invited to write a Lived Experience Description following van Manen's (1997) framework. More specifically, this invited them to write a description of what it is like to respond to problematic behavior by describing an external event (what happened, when, where, etc.) and internal processes (feelings, moods, emotions), while avoiding causal explanations. Clear instructions and a sample lived experience description (not relating to classroom behavior) was provided as guidance for participants (see Appendix A). The second component to data gathering in this study was an invitation to participate in a one-on-one hermeneutical reflection (van Manen, 1997); taking the shape of a semi-structured interview, this conversation occurred after the researcher had about two weeks to read, process, and explore the lived experience description. This interview first sought to answer the research questions about how Catholic social doctrine and restorative practices concepts influence teacher responses to behavior, if at all, then sought to dig deeper into the question of how teacher responses to problematic behavior come to be by exploring the intentionalities present among unstable and

shifting relationships and contexts. The semi-structured interview questions are found in Appendix B. The interviews were recorded and transcribed (in addition to notes taken during the interview), and communication about and submission of the lived experience descriptions was done via email. Initially, this research project also proposed to do a focus group to gather additional data, but this data source was dropped due to difficulties with confidentiality and finding participants.

Description of Data Analysis

When considering phenomenological data analysis, Vagle suggests that lines of flight encourage one to look at inconsistencies and consider where the data might be 'taking off' through those inconsistencies, and what can be learned when those paths of 'taking off' might be followed. Needing more structure for the data analysis, this researcher considered Vagle's framework but also used the steps suggested by van Manen (1997), which include examining lived experience data by first looking for the main significance in the text as a whole, then looking for selective phrases that are revealing or insightful, and finally going line-by-line to explore what sentences or statements each contribute to the understanding. Vagle and van Manen provide several guiding questions that were considered throughout the review of data:

- What is going on here, what is this an example of? (van Manen, 1997)
- What is the essence of responding to problematic behavior?
- "Where might I (the researcher) have retreated to either/or thinking?" (Vagle, 2018, p. 158)
- Where might I appear "certain" or "uncertain" of what something means? (Vagle, 2018, p. 158)

- "What doesn't seem to fit? If I follow this "mis-fit" notion, idea, insight, perspective, what might I learn about the phenomenon that is not yet think-able?" (Vagle, 2018, p. 157)

The following is a description of the specific method of analysis that came to be for this study. First, each interview transcription and lived experience description was read twice to gather a big-picture understanding of the teacher participants' thinking about problematic behavior. Within this reading, several things were pulled out, including answers to the research questions about the influence of Catholic social doctrine and restorative practices on responses to behavior, and specific examples of problematic behavior and responses to behavior in both participants' classrooms. Next, the specific descriptive experiences relevant to this study (such as an example of behavior and how a participant responded) were isolated, and then, in van Manen's words, the researcher "tr[ied] to unearth something "telling," something "meaningful," something "thematic" in the various experiential accounts" (van Manen, 1997, p. 86).

In reviewing each descriptive experience, either from the interviews or the lived experience descriptions, the following questions were asked: *What is going on here? What is this an example of? What is the essence of this response to behavior?* Each problematic behavior experience was first read as a whole to gather information on what was going on in the example and then read by selective phrases to better frame what that behavior response was an example of. The experiences were then read line by line to explore additional sentences or statements that contributed to a greater understanding of the essence of that response to behavior. The following are some themes, or codes, which came from the descriptive experiences:

- Considering a student's potential response to a consequence before implementing it.

- Engaging parents, relying on consequences to happen at home to reinforce school expectations.
- Understanding a student's context, knowing when to push a student or pull back on expectations.
- Giving second chances and redoing things without consequences.
- Using consequences to manage classroom processes and communication with home.
- Difficulty with providing accommodations and holding different expectations for students.
- The perspective of a parent and educators responding to behavior as they would want teachers to respond to their own children.

Next, the interview transcriptions and participants' lived experience descriptions were read by phrases in order to isolate thematic statements that contributed to a greater understanding of how Justine and Olivia thought about behavior in their classrooms, and then the texts were read line-by-line to isolate additional phrases or language that supported the themes that came from the descriptive experiences (van Manen, 1997). Figure 2: Process for Reviewing Data is a visual representation of the process for data analysis.

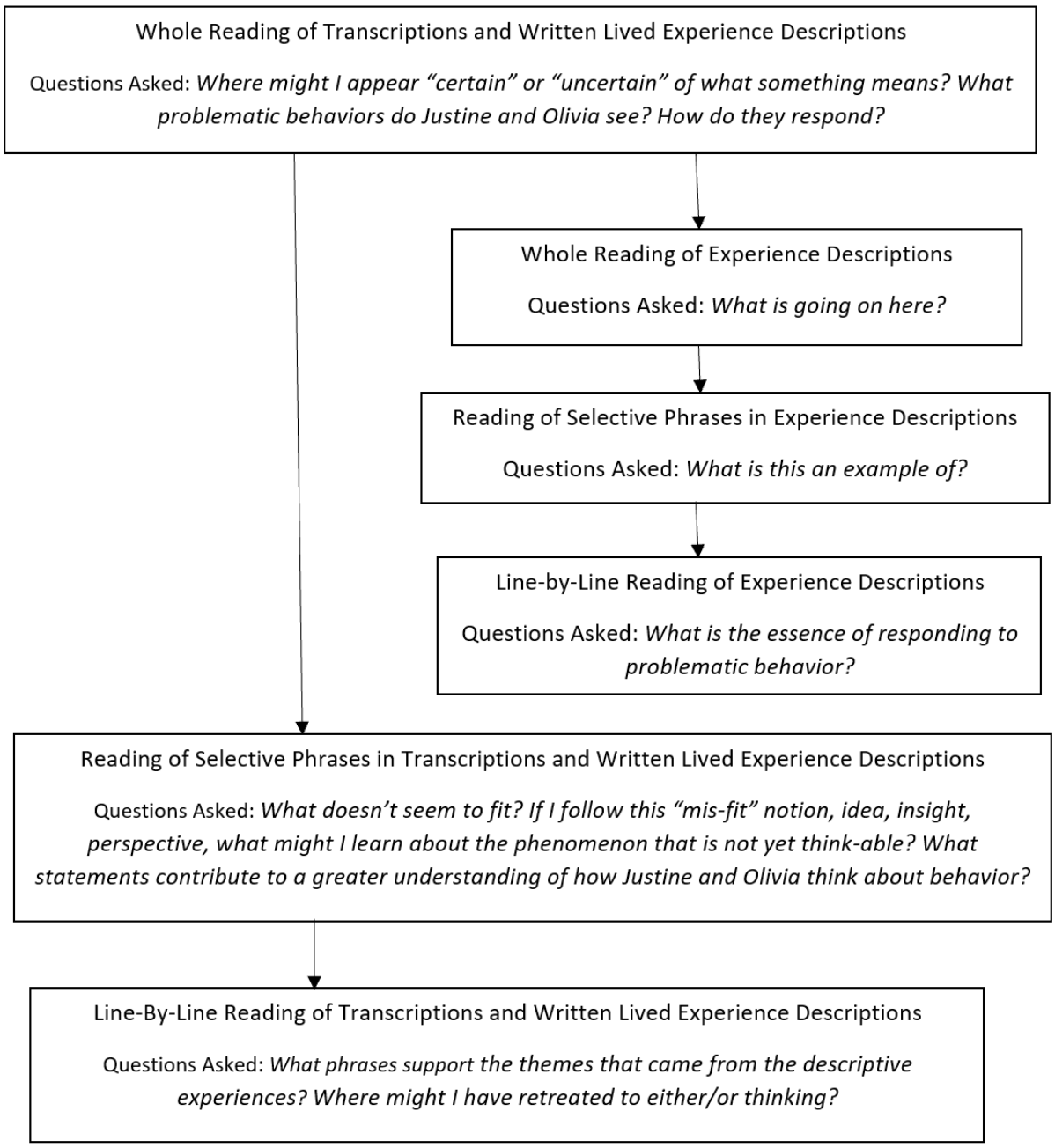

Figure 2: Process for Reviewing Data

Additionally, this researcher used a post-reflexion journal in order to reflectively examine what frames personal beliefs and perspectives. Vagle's *post-reflexions* are an "outgrowth" of phenomenological bracketing (2018, p. 153) and are similar to subjectivity statements commonly found in qualitative research. The post-reflexions journal was started prior to research, and then

continued throughout and after data collection; it was a combination of processing and developing phenomenological ideas, field notes, reflections, encounters with the data, and expansion upon binary thinking, biases, and certainties/uncertainties. More specifically, in this study, the post-reflexions journal focused on moments when the researcher connected or disconnected with the data, moments she was shocked by the data, working through moments of either/or thinking, and the "bottom lines" of beliefs and opinions that were difficult to release (Vagle, 2018, p. 154). Both Vagle (2018) and van Manen (1997) acknowledge, that while phenomenological bracketing requires the researcher to set aside prior beliefs and knowings about the research data, this is nearly impossible to do and is not entirely necessary. In fact, van Manen (1997) notes, "An adult's understanding of a child's experience has something to do with the way the adult stands in the world. So, we need to ask, what does it mean to be an educator *and* a human science researcher?" (p.137). To this end, a statement is provided here that attempts to articulate what frames of seeing this researcher brought to this particular project.

> *I am a practicing Catholic who views the world through a lens consistent with Catholic social doctrine. Two things have contributed to this worldview: my experience with Catholicism and my experience in education. As a Catholic, I have read Church documents extensively in order to better understand the Church's social teaching and how that can contribute to a more just and peaceful worldview, and my own experience with Christ's unconditional love has helped me understand that we, as Catholics, are called to extend this unconditional love towards others. As an educator of seventeen years with experience in public schools, Catholic schools, and charter schools, and as both a general education teacher and a special education teacher, I have come to the belief that students* do well if they can*, and when they cannot do well, we find a skill gap*

or need gap the student needs support in filling. I am likely more biased towards systems and processes that view behavior through this lens and work to meet students' needs and teach them the skills to do well. In an effort to bracket my personal values, having taught in both very punitive and very restorative settings, I believe that punitive consequences take away opportunities for learning and can damage critical relationships between students and teachers. I believe in honoring the idea that all adults and students are doing the best they can with what they have and that challenges exist because of unmet needs. My experiences in the classroom have led me to believe that if we can work to meet the needs of our students and teach them to care for one another, we can create an inclusive and engaging learning environment.

Having set the groundwork by reviewing the background research, describing the methodology, and bracketing biases from the author, it is now appropriate to turn to the results of the research. The results are organized by research questions, first starting with how Olivia and Justine's responses to problematic behavior come to be. Then, the commonalities between restorative practices and Catholic social doctrine are linked to one another and are given flight alongside Justine and Olivia's lived experiences.

Research Findings

Both Olivia and Justine acknowledged that they see very few problematic behaviors in their classrooms. The most common behaviors that occur include blurting out, not listening the first time, not finishing homework, running in the hallways, slamming lockers, not trying/lack of effort, chatting during worktime, slow transitions, and physical roughness (rough-housing, not aggression). This is consistent with Mucci's 2014 research on common behaviors in Catholic schools; her interviews with Catholic high school teachers found that most student behaviors

were related to disrespect, and that teachers acknowledged most behaviors as not extreme or severe.

How might Olivia's responses to problematic student behavior have come to be?

When Olivia responds to problematic behavior in her upper elementary classroom, she does so in a number of ways. For minimally disruptive behaviors such as blurting, talking, or being off-task, Oliva will correct the wrongdoing and encourage the student to change their behavior. She might "get in their business" and give them the *teacher look* or get down on their level (such as squatting near their desk) to provide encouragement. Olivia said, "I'm not a raise my voice person. I don't have to raise my voice. It's gentle reminders, a hand on the shoulder – get with me." In her interview, Olivia also noted instances of asking the student to leave the classroom, involving the principal in higher-level behaviors, and involving parents.

When asked about how Olivia thinks about problematic behavior, she responded by talking more about what mitigates it than what might cause it. This line of thinking for Olivia largely comes from her experiences with a former partner teacher. About this former teacher, Olivia said,

> Every kid love[d] and adore[d her] not because they do – she wasn't doing what they wanted as far as like "she was so fun, she's the fun teacher, she lets us do whatever we want," they loved her because she set a bar, she believed in them and she made them work hard to achieve and they felt good about their successes.

Olivia saw how students were successful in her partner teacher's classroom, and this, coupled with her partner teacher's high expectations for Oliva as a colleague, set the foundation for how Olivia holds expectations in her classroom today. "I made her a promise when she [retired] that I was not going to lower a standard and I wasn't going to make it easy for myself by lowering the

bar. I promised her I would keep the standard." Oliva believes that most problematic behaviors can be mitigated when students feel safe and that they achieve best when the standard is set high; she says, "if you set the bar high, the majority of [students] will rise to the occasion and they feel good that somebody is believing in them, that they can achieve. It's how I…operate my classroom."

The only rule in Olivia's classroom is, "if it prevents you or anyone else from learning and being the best version of yourself, you shouldn't be doing it." When students demonstrate problematic behavior in Olivia's classroom, she holds the expectation firm and waits for the student to follow through. She notes that students in her room almost always do what they are told the first time, and if not, "you ask them a second time…they'll do it…our kids are pretty respectful kids." As an example, she says,

> If I'm filling in my assignment notebook, everybody should be filling in their assignment notebook. I put it on the board, you write it down…most of them will do it because that's their exit ticket out of my room – show me you took your notes, show me you filled out your assignment notebook. They just do it, and I think it's because of a mutual respect.

Olivia manages most problematic behavior in her own classroom but will involve the administration if she thinks a situation warrants it. "I don't take that many kids to the principal's office, there's levels of severity;" as an example, after an incident of online bullying,

> I felt myself that…I had to bring it down to the office and get my admin involved because now we're talking about reputation, defamation of character – a kid who doesn't want to come back to school because he's hurt and he's horrified.

Olivia continued on to describe how the online bullying was crude and slandering in nature, and she wanted the students to understand the severity of what they had done; involving the principal

as the next level of authority was, she felt, the most effective way to achieve this. She said, "I just felt like if I dealt with it as a classroom teacher, [the students] would have felt that they got away with a little something and that it wasn't that big of a deal."

Olivia also relies on parent support when responding to problematic behavior in her classroom, both by reaching out to them during the school day as well as trusting that consequences for school-related behavior will happen at home. In recalling the online bullying incident, Olivia told the victim student's family that the situation "was being handled, and there was conversation and there will be consequences from the home end and the school end." She could not share specifics with the family but believed her communication that consequences were received from both the home and school was important. With a different student, Olivia used parent communication both when something happened and at regular intervals throughout the school day. For example, when the student refused to transition to another class, Olivia said,

> He was just frozen, debilitated, he'd just sit there. I had to call [my principal] down a couple [of] times, we had to call [his] mom on speakerphone and get all the kids out of the room just to try to get him to budge.

As part of a way to both manage this student's behaviors as well as communicate with home, Olivia eventually started texting his mother twice per day, "once halfway through the day…[a] midday check in to let her know how his day is going, then end of the day to let her know how the end of the day went."

Another meaningful connectedness for Olivia is her role as a mother. When considering her responses to problematic behavior and holding expectations for her school students, Olivia considers her role as a parent and how she would want other teachers to do the same for her own children. She said,

> I try to remind myself, what would I want [my kids'] teachers to do? If my kids had late work, I want my kids' teachers to hold them to that standard, to remind them, you get one more day [and] then I don't want it.

Olivia wants other adults to hold her own children to a high standard, so she seeks to do this for her students. She acknowledges it was not always this way for her, and several factors have contributed to her developing this philosophy; in addition to the influence of her former teacher, becoming a mom, and maturing through her many years of teaching, she also believes that had she started teaching in a public school, she would not have the high standards she has today. She said,

> It's been over half my life in [a Catholic] classroom so it's hard to imagine different, who would I be if I had started at age 22 in a public school? Probably not the same person. I don't think I would be, just because it's set up differently. The classroom is, the expectations, what you can and can't do, what you're allowed to say, what you're not allowed to say.

Olivia recalled watching her son participate in distance learning through COVID at his public school and when the bar for expectations was set too low for him, "he decided to not care, he disengaged." Olivia believes holding high standards and expectations is easier in a Catholic school than in a public school, and she feels a duty to do so because,

> [Our students] are there to learn and they want to learn, their parents have made an investment and they know that. They're not wealthy kids, mostly, they're middle class or families making sacrifices to send them there… [the students] know their families are making sacrifices to provide them with the education that has been chosen for them.

How might Justine's responses to problematic student behavior have come to be?

Before considering how Justine's responses to problematic behavior may have come to be, it is helpful to understand how she responds to problematic behavior in her lower elementary classroom. Justine first responds with a strategy to get the student to stop the behavior, which might look like her ignoring the behavior, giving a *teacher look*, calling on someone who is demonstrating positive behavior, and/or verbally redirecting the student's problematic behavior. If a student does not respond or change behavior after what she considers a fair chance and a clear warning, Justine calls on them to *change their card* on their classroom stoplight system. In the stoplight system, each student in the room has a red card, a yellow card, and a green card. Students start each day on green, and then when prompted by Justine they flip the green card to yellow. Justine did not indicate ever having asked a child to flip their card to red, but in the traditional use of the stoplight system, that would be the next logical step if a student's behavior did not improve when on yellow. Then, in Justine's classroom, if students remain on green all day, they get a golden ticket that can be later redeemed for choice-time activities or prizes. With the context for Justine's whole-class management system set, an exploration of the *meaningful connectednesses* that contributed to how Justine's responses to problematic behavior come to be can begin.

Justine thinks about several things when responding to a student's behavior, but her thinking is not linear or fixed; instead, the meaningful connectedneses in Justine's responses to behavior are continuously shifting and ever-changing. One of the things Justine considers is how *she* is feeling when she is running the classroom; she recognizes her own fatigue and acknowledges the students might also need a break. She said,

> Sometimes I think about myself, and I'm like, oh my gosh I have to teach a math lesson right now, I need a break, I need to do something…I feel like sometimes I have to stop and think about that because I'm like if you're feeling this way, how do you think [they're] feeling? Yes, they're resilient, totally, but it's asking a lot.

Justine provides scheduled time in the school day for her class to talk, move around, play, and check in with her, but she will provide extra breaks when she is receptive to the need for one.

Justine also thinks about how her instructional practices influence student behavior, noting that sometimes student behavior is a response to instructional strategies. For example, a student might blurt out from enthusiasm or because she asked an open-ended question that may have encouraged a response. She described,

> Sometimes it's hard when [all the students do] it because I feel like sometimes when I teach, I'll be like "7+3 *is*"...and so, like, the way…I say it, it's like I want them to blurt…so I feel like sometimes it's on me.

Justine frames this type of student behavior as whether a behavior was *purposeful* or not; when the behavior comes from excitement, engagement, or kids learning to be kids, she reacts differently than, for example, a behavior like "talking during tests. If they're talking, I'll give them a warning and after that I'm like, okay, you've had your warning, now you know what you did, you have to change your card." Justine believes that holding high expectations, such as in her example of talking during tests, helps students develop the perseverance and stamina they need to succeed in school, but she also believes that having flexibility and honoring students' development gives them space to learn and grow.

A further thing Justine takes into consideration is how the child will react to her consequence. For example, Justine's experience with a student who had been embarrassed in

front of the class made her realize that asking that student to change her card would have profoundly detrimental results; in describing this student's reaction to a situation when her homework had been on the floor without a name, Justine struggled to find adequate words to describe the student's distress but was able to clearly articulate her future responses to the student. She recalled,

> I thought she was going to pass out, because she was like so, like she was so, I couldn't tell, she was upset but then I felt like she was worried, anxious, and I've never had that happen, but she was like, I don't even know. But now…I will never make her change her card because of that situation.

Another example of Justine considering the child's response to flipping a card comes when she talks about a group of boys "who could change their card almost every day." She said, "I think it fazes them because they know they don't get their golden ticket, and I don't think they want to tell mom and dad." Justine leverages this insight when responding to students and uses the strategy for students who benefit from its accountability and transparency, but avoids using this strategy if she believes it will have an adverse effect on the student.

Justine's knowledge of a student's context and relationships with peers, family, and her as teacher also plays a part in Justine's response to behavior. She values getting to know her students and building strong relationships with them and their families, and when she sees something out of the ordinary, she considers this when the student demonstrates problematic behavior. Justine said,

> [If someone's having a hard time,] I feel like you give somebody a little extra leeway [when you see behaviors] because that's not their normal self…even if they make a

> mistake, you give them a little extra grace than you normally would because…this isn't like you.

This recurring theme of extra grace and second chances alongside high expectations was prevalent in Justine's examples of how she responds to students. For example, she described a student who had some difficulties at home and had failed a test,

> [He] literally failed it. It was synonyms and antonyms…I'm like, you didn't even care, you didn't even try, and I'm like this is not acceptable, like, you're going to go out and redo this and you're going to try as hard as you can. [He got] ten out of ten.

Justine knew that the student was struggling and could do better on the test, and therefore believed that an unconditional second chance was warranted.

Another factor that plays into how Justine responds to problematic behavior is related to documenting behaviors and communicating with parents. She sends home a communication page that documents when students change their cards, and she encourages students to talk with their parents about why the card was changed. This documentation then gets used for conferences so Justine can talk with the family about patterns and concerns, and it reduces the number of emails/phone calls she makes for smaller behaviors like blurting, running in the halls, or missing homework. She notes, "…I try to put the responsibility on them, and then unless there's a huge pattern, which, very rarely I feel like it happens, I don't have to be emailing every night."

Lastly, becoming a mother has also influenced how Justine thinks about student behavior. When her son entered first grade, Justine was afraid that he would not do well; "but he's doing great…I feel like that also makes me stop and think as a parent…so I try to make sure my students feel that way, too." Justine wants her students to understand that mistakes are part of learning, and like her own children, she wants her students to believe that they *can* do well.

Meaningful Connectednesses for Justine and Olivia

As evidenced by Justine and Olivia's experiences, responding to problematic behavior in the classroom is a profoundly complicated experience that is not held solely individually and is ever-changing and ever-shifting. Figure 3 is a visual representation of the varying meaningful connectednesses present at any time in Justine and Olivia's responses to problematic behavior. A funnel is used for this visual representation in order to acknowledge the many connectednesses that go into any given decision. There is no particular order or arrangement of this visual funnel since different connectednesses have stronger or weaker influence in any given moment; in addition, because two-dimensional representations like this funnel cannot capture movement, arrows are included to help the reader visualize that the connectednesses are always flowing, moving, and shifting.

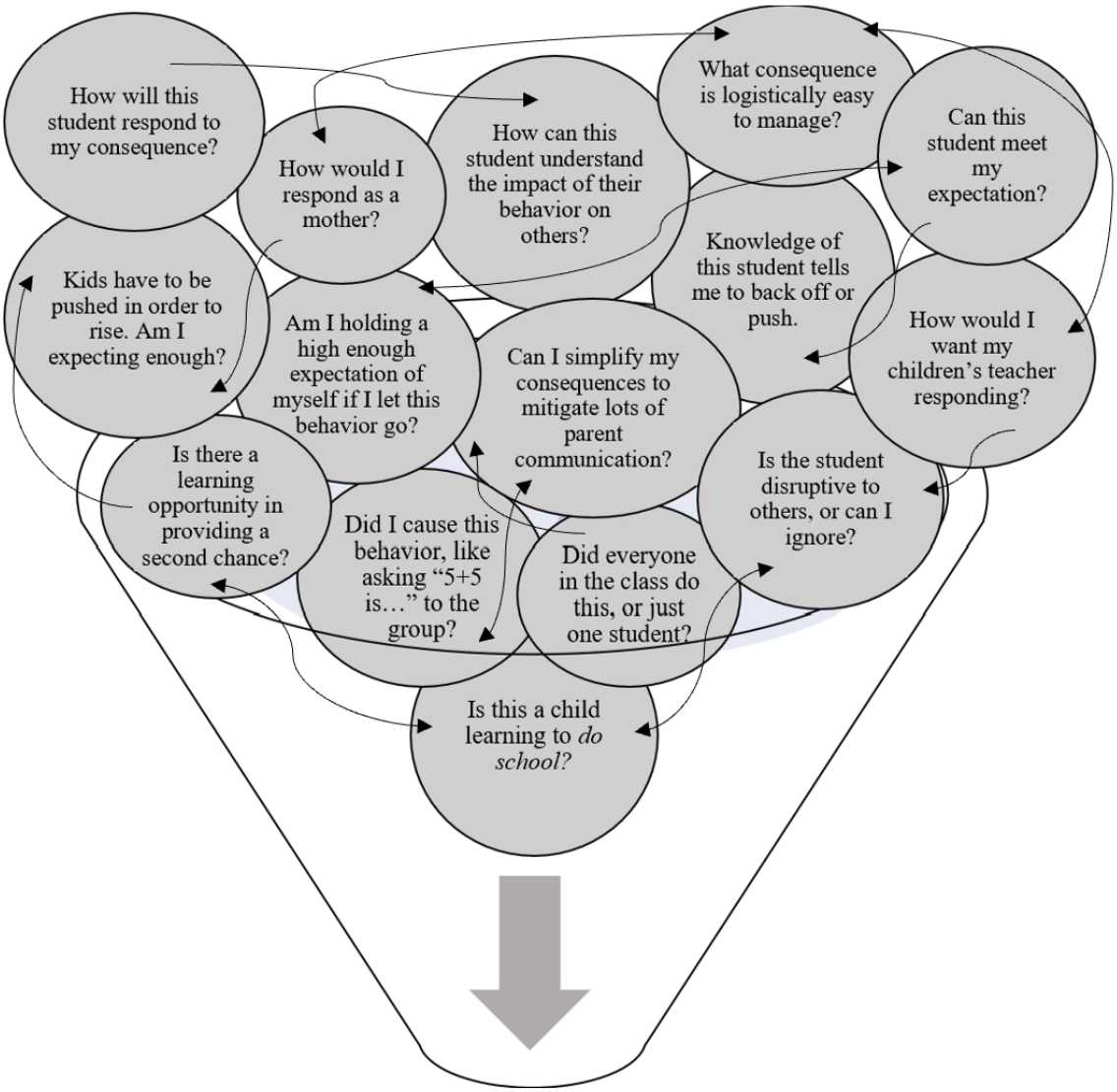

Figure 3: Meaningful Connectednesses in Justine and Olivia's Responses to Problematic Behavior

Intentionalities are socially constructed, Vagle (2018) says, and are ever-changing and evolving. The ever-changing nature was seen in how Olivia's meaningful connectednesses changed slightly after COVID-19 or when her colleague retired, and in how Justine's shifted as she became a mother; the social construction of their intentionalities was evident when neither teacher's meaningful connectednesses were rooted solely in themselves, such as Justine's

responses to behavior based on how individual students will react, or Olivia's reliance on parent involvement for her students. In post-intentional phenomenology, though, it is not enough to simply identify the meaningful connectednesses of the research participants. Vagle (2018) notes, "from a Deleuzoguattarian perspective, one does not start with the stable subject and try to follow that subject's intending on and with the world" (pg. 130). This is where theory can provide a point of launch for deeper reflection. Vagle, in discussing how to think with theory, notes that the chosen theory (for this research, Catholic social doctrine) is not an end-post for what can or cannot be said in an analysis; instead, Catholic social doctrine can be used as a "generative act" (2018, p. 143). Since Justine and Olivia's intentionalities and experiences are both "constructed and constructing" (p. 130), their lived experiences can be used within the bracketing of Catholic social doctrine and restorative practices as points of departure for following Deleuzoguattarian lines of flight.

Thinking with Theory: Catholic Social Doctrine

Before proceeding further, is helpful now to return to a brief summary of the principles of Catholic social doctrine and then how they might be posted alongside problematic student behavior and teachers' responses to behavior. Catholic social doctrine is rooted first and foremost in the idea that God so loved humanity that He created men and women in His own image and likeness, and by extension, then, that humans have inherent dignity and worth (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §105 & §107; McKinney, 2019; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2012, §1700, 1703). This dignity is realized not in isolation but instead in authentic relationships with God, self, and others (Benedict, 2009, §53; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2012, §1878, 1905, 1906), which lays the groundwork for the principle of the common good. The Second Vatican Council defines the common good as "the sum total of social

conditions which allow people, either as a group or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily" (1965a, §26). Catholics have a duty to work for and remain at the service of the common good, which looks like configuring social life in a way that both ensures all individuals have access to necessities to live and also nurtures and supports the development of humans (Francis, 2015, §70, 119; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §165). The principles of subsidiarity and solidarity are manifestations of the total dignity of the person. Solidarity suggests that all are "obliged to contribute to the common good of society at all levels," while subsidiarity suggests that "neither the state nor any society must ever substitute itself for the initiative and responsibility of individuals…and communities at the level on which they can function, nor must they take away the room necessary for their freedom" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1986, §73). A distinguishing characteristic of subsidiarity is the concept of participation, which calls on the individual to have an active voice in their own decision-making with a lens for the common good; through participation, humans can advocate, problem-solve, and work towards a pursuit of a right relationship with God, self, and others.

With the classroom as a microcosm of the world, Catholic social doctrine invites educators to consider that space as the place where students can learn the Church's social teaching through active experience (Francis, 2020, §13, 114; John XXIII, 1961, §229-231; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, §47). The Catholic intellectual tradition is clear on education's place in the formation of disciples; Gaillardetz (2018), Pope John XXIII (1961, §236-237) and Pope Francis (2020, §153) explicitly state that an authentic understanding of the Church's social justice principles is learned only when they are internalized, which comes through *doing* because "actions on behalf of social justice will teach Christians how to act" (John XXIII, 1961, §232). Francis (2020) writes, "The values of freedom, mutual respect, and

solidarity can be handed from a tender age" (§113); therefore, Catholic education has a duty to develop students' consciences in a way that allows them to participate in their own development and formation.

When asked, neither Justine nor Olivia talked about providing space or opportunities for their students to practice concepts related to Catholic social doctrine – in fact, neither teacher had knowledge of how (or if) principles of Catholic social doctrine influenced their work in their classroom. When asked about Catholic social doctrine principles and whether they influence her thinking and teaching, Olivia noted that she believes her Catholic faith has influenced how and why she holds high expectations for her students, but she struggled to articulate exactly what component of Catholicism was the foundation for her thinking. She said,

> I feel like my faith and how I parent and the respect…for my kids, my kids for me, is how I handle things [in the classroom] and I have to believe that my Catholic upbringing and the Catholic teaching has a huge influence.

Justine, similarly, struggled to articulate how Catholic social doctrine directly impacts her teaching; she instead talked about teaching her students to be disciples. She said,

> [Every year] our school has a theme, a Bible verse theme…so right now, it's being a joyful disciple, so right now everything I talk about is being a disciple of Jesus…I feel like I teach more about *how can you be a saint, how can you be a disciple, how can you be like Jesus,* versus, like, [Catholic social teaching.]

Catholic Social Doctrine and Restorative Practices: An Entangled Line of Flight

When asked specifically about any potential use of or influence of restorative practices or restorative justice, neither Olivia nor Justine had any prior knowledge. When presented with an explanation of the core tenants of restorative practices, both indicated that they actively try to

build relationships with their students and seek to serve their community through service projects. While neither Justine nor Olivia had a solid understanding of how Catholic social doctrine or restorative practices might help inform their work in responding to problematic behavior, a closer look into the alignment of Catholic social doctrine and restorative practices and the experiences of Olivia and Justine may yield some unsaid connections or promising lines of flight.

The Punitive Paradigm

Recalling that the duality of the 'punitive approach' and the 'restorative approach' is never as simple as either/or, it is helpful before moving on to recall the basic definition of both of these approaches and situate them alongside principles of Catholic social doctrine. The punitive approach views student behavior as a *rule broken*, and students are disciplined based on the behavior that broke a rule, often with pre-prescribed consequences (such as one detention for three tardies or being sent to the office for a certain number of classroom disruptions). The focus is on compliance, and the consequence, generally unrelated to the problematic behavior (such as losing recess time for not finishing homework or losing *Fun Friday* for disrupting class), is given out in order to deter future problematic behavior (Wright & Zehr, 2008; Jeznik, et al., 2020; Smith, et al., 2015; Morneau, 2019).

It is helpful, now, to put the tenets of a punitive paradigm alongside corresponding teachings from Catholic social doctrine.

Punitive Paradigm	Catholic Social Doctrine
Misbehavior or problematic student behavior is a breaking of school rules.	Sin (problematic behavior) is "is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2012, §1849) and leads to the breakdown of community. (Gaillardetz, 2018)

When considering consequences, focus is on establishing blame for who broke the rule.	Duty is to honor and meet the needs of all (both victim and perpetrator) as best as possible because "one person's problems are the problems of all…no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together." (Francis, 2020, §32)
Consequences are meant to punish and deter/prevent the behavior from happening again.	After a conflict, there is a duty to cultivate reconciliation, solidarity, and peace. (Francis, 2020, §243)
Adherence to due process and set/established consequences for rule-breaking.	Repairing harm requires that "rights be restored if they have been violated." (Francis, 2020, §62)
Principal or dean or other individual decides consequences as representative of those involved and effected (the victim, the classroom, the community, etc.).	Solidarity and subsidiarity ask that all (both the victim and the perpetrator) be involved in problem solving because "our openness to others, each of whom is…capable of knowing, loving, and entering into dialogue remains the source of our nobility as human persons." (Francis, 2015, §119)
Accountability is in accepting consequences for wrongdoing and expectation to not repeat the behavior.	Accountability is in the "duty to cultivate and maintain proper relationship with [one's] neighbor, for whose care and custody [one] is responsible" and repairing the ruin when necessary. (Francis, 2015, §70)

Figure 4: The Punitive Paradigm and Catholic Social Doctrine

As previously stated, the punitive paradigm of responding to or thinking about student behavior rests primarily on the idea that problematic behavior is the breaking of a school rule. Consequences are meant to punish or deter individuals from further problematic behavior and are generally determined by adherence to due process (such as a student handbook) and/or a school administrator. Accountability for the wrongdoing is in following through with the consequence and adherence to the expectation to do not the behavior again. Similar to the United States' retributive justice system, the belief is that the consequence will deter future rule-breaking (Wright & Zehr, 2008; Jeznik, et al., 2020; Smith, et al., 2015; Morneau, 2019).

Catholic education has traditionally held a mostly punitive paradigm with extensive use of exclusionary practices (Philippe et al., 2017), which further encourages individualism in a culture already ripe with it (World Synod of Bishops, 1971). Pope Francis (2020) says,

"[Individualism] makes us believe that everything consists in giving free rein to our own ambitions as if by pursuing ever greater ambitions and creating safety nets we would somehow be serving the common good." Working with this definition, one can surmise that a punitive viewpoint, rooted in individualism, sees problematic behavior as a *choice* on the part of the student, or rather a lack of choosing what is in his or her best interest; it believes that he or she is *choosing* to misbehave, disrupt class, or not complete work. The use of exclusionary practices, then, is a logical leap: if the student does not want to be in the classroom and does not want to comply, then they should not be allowed to disrupt the learning of others. This idea is a realization of *throwaway culture*, which suggests that individuals are disposable or less valuable if they are not positively contributing in the way that's expected of them (Francis, 2020). Individualism (and throwaway culture) is rooted in self-preservation, and through this paradigm, if a student does not follow the rules (thereby choosing to not better him or herself), he or she will not be allowed to disrupt others in their own work. Though neither Justine nor Olivia firmly subscribed to a punitive paradigm, there are components of it in both of their experiences.

In Olivia's classroom, the punitive mindset is present in her firmly held expectation that students comply with directives because that was the expectation. When a student does not comply, Olivia holds the expectation firm and waits for the student to follow through. She notes that students in her room almost always do what they are told the first time, and if not, "you ask them a second time…they'll do it." The punitive mindset is also present in Olivia's thinking both about the reasons for a student's behavior and when she considers that student versus the needs of the classroom as a whole; when describing his behavior, she said, "when [he] chooses to participate, he's on, but if he doesn't choose to…then he just disengages and refuses." In talking

about an incident when this student shut down, Olivia revealed a punitive framework when she talked about her response; she said,

> I was like, "okay, buddy, now you may leave [the room] while I finish this up with the rest [of the class]." So, he went out of the room and I finished…with the other kids because that's what they're there for, I'm not going to let him eat their minutes.

For Justine, the punitive paradigm is found in her use of the stoplight system and her golden tickets. In describing her thinking, she wrote,

> After my first year teaching, I knew I needed to change something about myself…I felt like I lacked control in situations that needed control and then maybe I was over-controlling in situations that needed less control…I felt like I needed to find a way to motivate my students to do good and be the change I wanted to see in the classroom…I wanted to reinforce the positive behaviors instead of getting angry at the bad behaviors I didn't want to see.

This led Justine and her co-teacher at the time to start implementing golden tickets to reward the positive behavior they wanted to see. This behavioral strategy is generally punitive in nature because the golden ticket reinforcement is not related to the behavior itself, similar to how the stoplight system's use of changing cards is not a consequence related to the behavior itself.

The Restorative Paradigm

It is helpful, now, to provide a contrasting lens by putting the restorative paradigm alongside the same moral and theological teachings of the Catholic church used above with the punitive paradigm.

Restorative Paradigm	Catholic Social Doctrine
Misbehavior or problematic behavior is a broken relationship that results from a skill gap or a need gap.	Sin (problematic behavior) is "is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2012, §1849) and leads to the breakdown of community (Gaillardetz, 2018).
Focus is on repairing the relationship and teaching the needed skills and/or meeting the needs of all involved.	Duty is to honor and meet the needs of all (both victim and perpetrator) as best as possible because "one person's problems are the problems of all…no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together." (Francis, 2020, §32)
Consequences are meant to restore relationships and teaching the needed skills and/or meeting the needs of all involved.	After a conflict, there is a duty to cultivate reconciliation, solidarity, and peace. (Francis, 2020, §243)
How harm is repaired is determined by the needs of the victim, perpetrator, and community.	Repairing harm requires that "rights be restored if they have been violated." (Francis, 2020, §62)
All parties involved in the harm are involved in the repair because mutual concern is "reciprocal, interconnected caring." (Evans & Vaandering, 2016, p. 32)	Solidarity and subsidiarity ask that all (both the victim and the perpetrator) be involved in problem solving because "our openness to others, each of whom is…capable of knowing, loving, and entering into dialogue remains the source of our nobility as human persons." (Francis, 2015, §119)
Accountability is the collective responsibility for creating a sense of belonging and meeting each other's needs.	Accountability is in the "duty to cultivate and maintain proper relationship with [one's] neighbor, for whose care and custody [one] is responsible" and repairing the ruin when necessary. (Francis, 2015, §70)

Figure 5: The Restorative Paradigm and Catholic Social Doctrine

But it is not enough to simply align the ideas of restorative practices and Catholic social doctrine. Post-intentional phenomenology acknowledges that this research is stepping into the middle of teachers' responses to problematic behavior, and these intentionalities are ever-producing and ever-evolving. Recalling that the purpose of phenomenological research is, according to van Manen (1997), the "fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are (p. 12)," this research aims to follow the *lines of flight* that come to be when Catholic social doctrine and restorative practices are posted alongside each other with the intention of leading Catholic educators closer to a true fulfillment of the Second Vatican Council's conception that, "a true

education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share" (1965b, section 1). Seeking out the ways that restorative practices and Catholic social doctrine connect with one another will, hopefully, provide lines of flight that can help Catholic education become more true to itself.

Both the restorative paradigm and Catholic social doctrine are anchored in a similar place; the Church teaches that humans have inherent dignity and worth because they are created in the likeness and image of God, and the fundamental cornerstone of restorative practices is that humans have inherent dignity because "the essence of who they are cannot be replaced" (Evans & Vaandering, 2016, p. 32). Next, the Catholic Church teaches that because humans have inherent dignity and worth, they are thus called to be in full communion with God, self, and others, while the second core belief of restorative practices is that "human beings are interconnected with each other and the world" (Evans & Vaandering, 2016, p. 31). Both Justine and Olivia talked about the importance of having relationships with their students, which is reflective of both restorative practices and Catholic social doctrine. Both teachers actively seek to understand the context of their students' lives (in school, at home, and in the community), and they both place a profound value on building relationships with their students and families. They actively get to know their students, they attend community events students participate in, they know whole families instead of just their students, they communicate regularly, and they reach out when something does not seem right. However, aside from Justine's use of choice time/free social time during her day, neither teacher described intentional ways they work to build community or create a culture of encounter between students in their classrooms.

From the starting place of dignity and relationship, then, the consideration of consequences after problematic behavior finds entanglement in both restorative practices and Catholic social doctrine. The Catholic Church posits that sin, which could parallel problematic student behavior if one considers the classroom as a microcosm of society, is, instead of the breaking of a rule, a "failure in genuine love for God and neighbor," or the breakdown of a relationship (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2012, §1849; Gaillardetz, 2018, p. 18). From this, then, the natural consequences would focus on repairing the relationship or righting the wrong that was committed. Instead of adherence to due process or consequences determined by one single individual, the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity evoke collective involvement in problem-solving. The accountability for one's actions, then, is not in fulfilling a punishment, but instead is in one's "duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with [one's] neighbor, for whose care and custody [one] is responsible" (Francis, 2015, §70).

When considering what *right relationship* might mean, Catholics can turn to the Hebrew word for *peace,* or *shalom* (A. Levad, personal communication, March 12, 2023; Donohue, 2018); in his book *The Little Book of Biblical Justice,* Marshall (2005) suggests the meaning of *shalom* is a,

> State of soundness or flourishing in all dimensions of existence – in our relationship with God, our relationships with each other, our relationship with nature, and our relationship with ourselves…In this sense, Shalom encapsulates God's basic intention for humanity – that people live in a condition of 'all rightness' in every department of life. (p. 15)

God Himself desires right relationships, and Himself has become the very embodiment of this *rightness* by way of bestowing on all humans mercy and justice in bountiful measure. St. Thomas Aquinas so eloquently notes that,

> In every work of God, viewed at its primary source, there appears mercy. In all that follows, the power of mercy remains, and works indeed with even greater force; as the influence of the first cause is more intense than that of second causes. For this reason, does God out of abundance of His goodness bestow upon creatures what is due to them more bountifully than is proportionate to their deserts: since less would suffice for preserving the order of justice than what the divine goodness confers; because between creatures and God's goodness, there can be no proportion. (2006, ST I, q. 21, a. 4)

As beings created in the likeness and image of God, humans are representative of God on Earth and are called to emulate Christ's love for the world; inherent in this, then, is this duty to *rightness,* or *sedeqah*. In the Biblical tradition, *sedeqah*, the Hebrew word for *righteousness,* does not mean personal holiness or individual purity as current culture tends to define it but instead means "doing, being, declaring, or bringing about what is right" (Marshall, 2005, p. 14) – restoring things to a condition of "rightness" after a wrong has been committed (Marshall, 2005; Donohue, 2018). What is the "rightness," then? And what does it mean to return to "rightness" after conflict or harm? For this, one can turn again to the Hebrew tradition; sedeqah is most commonly used in the Bible in conjunction with another Hebrew word, *mishpat,* which means *justice*. There are many possible definitions of the word *justice*, but when coupled with sedeqah, justice represents right relationships. If God is the embodiment of justice and humans are called to live God's will on Earth, then it serves that justice "...is all about relationships. It has to do with God's relationship with humanity and the world, and with the relationship of human beings to each other and to the larger created order" (Marshall, 2005, 29). The very notion of forgiveness, coupled with the sacrament of reconciliation, reinforces the fact that humans are fallen creatures, sinners, and will make mistakes against each other, God, nature, and themselves,

and Pope Francis makes it clear that living in "all rightness" does not mean an absence of sin or of conflict (2020, §240). The duty, then, is to right what wrong has been committed and return relationships to a state of *rightness* through solidarity by cultivating reconciliation and peace (Francis, 2020, §243, 62). Subsidiarity and participation contribute by suggesting that all parties (including perhaps the student who demonstrated the behaviors, a peer who was hurt, bystander peers, and perhaps the teacher) should be involved in articulating and repairing harm, because, as Pope Francis says, "our openness to others, each of whom is…capable of knowing, loving, and entering into dialogue remains the source of our nobility as human persons" (Francis, 2015, §119). This collective effort to care for others nurtures a culture of encounter and the attempts to return relationships to rightness by repairing harm done is a fulfillment of the duty of all Catholics to work towards the common good; this practicing and modeling for students at a young age lays groundwork for the skills students need to do similar work when they are older.

Neither Justine nor Olivia talked about intentionally repairing relationships between students or between adults/students when behaviors caused a problem. After the previously mentioned online bullying incident, Oliva and the principal held a group conversation with the principal, teacher, and students that sought to help the students to better understand the implications of their actions. When asked about the result, Olivia said,

> [The students] were remorseful…they hadn't really thought through what they had done and didn't really understand, didn't take the time to consider or understand how it would make their classmates feel. They thought they were being funny. They thought it was a joke.

Olivia went on to describe how the most impactful part of the conversation was when the teachers turned the situation around on the students and asked, "If that was said about you, would

you think it was funny…how would you feel? How [would you] want to face your class?" This reframing for the students was the foundation for a remorseful understanding of the implications of their actions; however, Olivia did not describe any attempts to address the needs of both parties nor were all student voices actively present in either healing the harm done or rebuilding community. Another example of this occurred during character education in Olivia's class; she described an incident several years ago when a student, Jane (name has been changed for confidentiality purposes),

> Just looked at the group and said, "you girls have never been nice to me since I've been here," totally just called them out, straight up. She's like, "I honestly don't care what you think about me anymore, I'm over it." And I was like, okay…she didn't cry, she wasn't emotional, she was just like, "none of you have ever been nice to me, you've never been my friend, you've always left me out of the group." And those girls, they didn't know how to, I think they felt bad only because I was in the room. I don't think they felt super bad for Jane, they knew 100% she was right, but now [the girls felt] "I'm getting called out, I'm getting called out in front of…[the] teacher."

How the peers treated Jane is an example of harm to relationships, and while it is unclear how Olivia handled this situation after the fact, this experience is a good example of an opportunity for healing and restoration of right relationships. Restorative practices in education prioritize practices that create just and equitable outcomes where the most vulnerable and marginalized are cared for and included (Evans & Vaandering, 2016) while Catholic social doctrine calls on humans to "appeal to the solidarity born of the consciousness that we are responsible for the fragility of others as we strive to build a common future" (Francis, 2020, §115). Following a line of flight fleeing from the posting of restorative practices and Catholic social doctrine might mean

moving forward in a way that helped both parties in both situations (the online bully and the victims and Jane's peers and Jane) see the *story of the other* and, through that, "be changed by [their] contact with human suffering" (Francis, 2020, §68). This fleeing from individualism and authoritarian decision-making is the crux of the culture of encounter, Pope Francis (2020) says, and considered in the current education application, then, student dignity can be fully realized when peers have a chance to *see* and *love* the other. This line of flight invites educators to provide space for suffering and conflict to give way to dialogue and healing, for,

> Love, then, is more than just a series of benevolent actions…considering [others] of value, worth, pleasing, and beautiful apart from physical or moral appearances…only by cultivating this way of relating to one another will we make possible a social friendship. (Francis, 2020, §94)

Bringing It All Together: Entangling and Fleeing

Research acknowledges that a shift in mindset is critical if a school is to fully embrace the restorative approach (Jeznik, et al., 2020; Brent, 2019). If an intentional shift is not made, as Reimer (2019) and Brent (2020) found, restorative practices in a punitive-based system can lead to students feeling like their voice does not matter, weakened conflict resolution skills, student perception of a lack of empathy from teachers, and teacher perception of a *softened* disciplinary code that undermined their authority as teachers and did little to *punish* students for misbehavior. Making an intentional shift from punitive towards restorative requires set boundary adherence to each paradigm in its entirety. However, both Justine and Olivia's experiences suggest that responding to problematic behavior is rarely as simple as either punitive or restorative, and this is consistent with Vagle's post-intentional phenomenological notion that lines of flight,

> …always aim to flee the tight boundaries of any theoretical framework and method, understanding that these lines of flight will not remove us from the pull to rigidity and structure—rather we will find ourselves in constant tension as the flights proceed. (2018, p. 136)

It is here, in this entangled tension, that Justine and Olivia's lived experiences suggest that perhaps the punitive and restorative paradigms are too simple, too dualistic, too posted, too binary, or too unbending. Justine believes that students are learning to do school (a restorative skill-based belief), and finds success in using golden tickets and the stoplight system (punitive responses), and in Olivia's experience with a former student, Martin (name has been changed for confidentiality), she acknowledged difficulty with seemingly unfair expectations (a punitive response) while desperately needing to understand why his behaviors happened so she could help (a restorative perspective). The current study steps into the middle of Justine and Olivia's evolving and becoming; neither educator started their career with the same beliefs they expressed in their interviews, and both continue to shift in their meaningful connectednesses. The entanglement of restorative and punitive makes for answers that are not yet clear or distinguished: how to be in the Catholic elementary classroom given the ever-challenging behaviors of students is not explicit or easy. But, as was stated earlier, the intention of this phenomenological research is to help Catholic educators, "become more fully who we are" (van Manen, 1997, p. 12), by following the lines of flight that come to be when Catholic social doctrine and restorative practices are set aside each other. The following sections look more deeply at the experiences of both Justine and Olivia in order to highlight their entanglement of restorative and punitive, as well as provide potential lines of flight to flee towards a way of being that is more true to the potential of Catholic education.

Entangling and Fleeing: Justine

For Justine, the entangling of restorative and punitive is found in the differences between how she thinks about student behavior and how she responds to and reinforces student behavior. Recall that the restorative paradigm posits that problematic student behavior occurs because of a need gap or a skills gap, while the Catholic Church acknowledges the importance of meeting individual needs through sedeqah and mishpat. A more helpful education-specific articulation of this from the Catholic Church is found in the Congregation for Catholic Education's 2014 document *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion;*

> Nowadays, school systems are asked to promote skill development, and not just to convey knowledge; the skill paradigm, interpreted according to a humanistic vision, goes beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge or abilities: it involves the development of students' total personal resources, establishing a meaningful bond between school and life. It is important for schooling to enhance not only skills that are related to knowing and knowing how to do things, *but also skills that apply to living alongside others and growing as human beings*. These are reflective skills, for instance, by which we are responsible for our actions, or intercultural, decision-making, citizenship skills, that are becoming increasingly important in our globalized world and affect us directly, as is the case with skills related to consciousness, critical thinking and creative and transforming action. (§1e, emphasis added)

The Congregation for Catholic Education's use of the phrase *skill paradigm* is particularly relevant here because it provides a helpful extension that links both the restorative paradigm and Catholic social doctrine. As previously stated, Catholic social doctrine teaches that humans are made in the likeness and image of God and are created for full communion, or right relationship,

with God, self, and others. This innate desire is present in all beings and is the underlying reason for the necessity to repair harm after a broken relationship. This innate desire towards goodness and rightness, coupled with the restorative paradigm notion that harm done is the result of an unmet need, launches a line of flight that entangles problematic behavior in the classroom as a skill gap or a need gap; from this line of thinking, students do not demonstrate problematic behavior because they *don't want* to do well, they demonstrate problematic behavior because they *can't* do well – or they do not have the "skills that apply to living alongside others and growing as human beings" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014, section 1e).

The skill paradigm alongside the golden ticket/stoplight system is Justine's entanglement of the restorative and punitive paradigms. Recalling Justine's use of the stoplight system and golden tickets, her use of these practices stemmed from desperation in her early years of teaching; she said, "I was feeling defeated like I couldn't win. At times I wasn't enjoying my job like I thought I would have been." The implementation of golden tickets alongside the stoplight system provided Justine with a way to reward her students and keep them engaged, and it gave her as an educator a system that provided space for her to help students change their behavior and engage in learning. She said, "I feel like this has helped me regain control of my classroom, and I have been using it for years now…I think these tickets have help[ed] my students engage more in my lesson[s] and take responsibility for their own learning." Justine believes it is important to name problematic behavior so students learn; "I feel like if you are caught doing something wrong, I feel like you need to be told you're doing something wrong or else you're not going to learn from it." She explains that after she asks a student to change their card,

> Sometime [later] during the day I'll check in and be like, "okay, when you go home and talk to mom and dad, you had to change your card and you're on yellow…make sure you

> say, I was asked twice in spelling to not do XYZ, or not to draw pictures on my board when I'm supposed to be writing words," and so I feel like I reiterate *WHY* they changed their card…I try to put the responsibility on them.

Even though Justine uses punitive practices in her classroom, she acknowledges that sometimes the expectations for kids are high; "I feel like they're still, like, learning to be a kid…I feel like that's the behaviors and I feel like we expect a lot from this kid, like, so much!" Her respect for children developmentally is part of her embodiment of the skill paradigm; it is also evident in how Justine talked about her experiences with student behavior; "I don't know if problematic behavior is the right way [to describe it]…it's kids learning to be kids." Also illustrative of Justine's restorative nature are the previously mentioned examples of giving extra grace and second chances and considering how a student will respond before disciplining. Marshall (2005) notes that a Biblically just society should not aim to treat all the same, for, "justice requires different priorities in different settings" (p. 31). Justine's philosophy on behavior does exactly this: aims to honor and meet the needs of her students in each moment of problematic behavior.

Justine's stoplight consequence and her golden tickets as positive reinforcement are not directly related to the skills her students need to learn or the relationships broken in disruption to learning, suggesting a punitive paradigm, while Justine's belief that kids are "learning to be kids" and her deep care for providing them space to learn and grow suggests a restorative paradigm. However, despite this dualism, in honoring the phenomenological aim to help Catholic education become more fully what it intends to be, it is helpful to follow a relevant line of flight provided by the connection between Catholic social doctrine and restorative practices. Justine's actions with the stoplight system stop short of a fully restorative approach because her students are missing a few opportunities: a chance to practice and develop the skills they need to succeed in

school, a chance to collaboratively repair or fix harm they caused, and the opportunity to work towards the common good by seeking to meet their own and each other's needs. Maybe this looks like providing space for two students to share how they hurt the other using pre-taught I-statements, allowing the class to brainstorm ways to change the classroom environment to meet the needs of one student, or providing space for a small group of students to practice conflict resolution skills. Catholic social doctrine explicitly states the importance of children learning by *doing,* (Francis, 2020, §13, 114; John XXIII, §229-231), and the very crux of Christ's time on Earth is a lived example of what it means to live as a Christian (Donohue, 2018; Gaillardetz, 2018). It is not enough for children to learn the principles of dignity, common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity simply by studying them on a page; this learning "must be supplemented by the students' active co-operation in their own training. They must gain an experimental knowledge of the subject, and that by their own positive action" (John XXIII, §231). Justine talked about teaching her students about virtues and doing service projects for others, but these actions stop short of giving students the chance to practice solidarity and participation in creating a classroom environment that serves the common good. Pope Francis and Pope John XXIII, emphasizing the importance of *doing* alongside learning, suggest that by providing opportunities for students to practice the very principles of Christian living within the classroom, educators can shape the character of their students in a way that allows students to think for themselves, and, in a cultural time defined by individualism, construct a better vision of what it means to truly live in right relationship with others (Francis, 2020, §13; Donahue, 2018; John XXIII §229-231).

Entangling and Fleeing: Olivia and Martin

In Olivia's lived experience description, she described her experience with a former student, Martin, who (on a daily basis) refused to complete any written work in the classroom

and would become disruptive to the learning environment. When asked about having Martin in class, she described,

> He'd often put his head [down], just rest his forehead on the desk and not sit up and talk to you. You'd squat down and try to get him to talk, a couple [of] times he'd absolutely refuse when they were lining up to leave, he wouldn't even get up and go…he was just frozen, debilitated, he'd just sit there.

Olivia's experience with Martin is deeply entangled with the restorative and punitive paradigms. She believed firmly that *something was wrong* with Martin and was determined to figure out the root of the issue. She said, "…I'm not going to take the easy road, I will pick the battle, I will find out what's going on, *why are you not doing what's asked of you?*" Olivia knew that while Martin's behaviors came across as defiant, they actually were not; "Counselors and people said it was anxiety and depression…he just disengages and refuses and comes off as defiant, and somebody who doesn't know he has anxiety and depression is going to think he's a defiant kid[.]" Olivia had known Martin and his family from previous years, so she knew what Martin was displaying in her classroom was abnormal for him. Olivia noted that Martin was a smart student, capable of doing the work, and his behaviors from that school year were not present in his previous years of schooling. She felt that something being wrong was the only explanation, and she deeply believed he needed help. She said,

> [Martin] was a good kid…I don't want to taint him as a not-good kid, he was a good kid who is going through a hard time. We all have dips and doodles and curves and bends in the road somewhere in our journey; [that year] was one of his bends.

When Martin would not communicate, would not advocate for himself, or when he shut down and refused all engagement or work, she frequently turned inward and carried the weight of his

difficulties on her own teacher shoulders; Olivia felt she had tried everything and yet nothing worked, and took her inability to help Martin personally. When reflecting on her responses to his behavior, she said,

> It was exhausting. I let him get the best of me on more than one occasion. I'd find myself so frustrated that I couldn't figure out how to deal with him…I was frustrated more with myself, my gosh, how can I not get through with this kid, how can I not find a way?

When the school counselor suggested Olivia extend some grace to herself in these difficult moments, she vehemently refused to break the promise she had made to her former colleague to uphold high expectations regardless of the challenges. Olivia said, "Oh if you think I'm going to give myself a little grace, you don't know me…I made a promise, I'll hold myself to that promise." Olivia's firm belief that something was wrong with Martin, coupled with her career-long promise to uphold high expectations for her students created tension that was difficult for Olivia to sit in. Evidence of this is found during a time when Martin was shut down and refusing to engage; after trying several failed strategies to engage Martin, Olivia's principal told her to back off and leave him alone, "which was hard for me…I felt it was super hard because I knew he could do the work." Knowing that Martin was smart and knowing that he had been successful during previous school years made it very difficult for Olivia to ease her commitment to uphold firm and consistent expectations.

Similarly, Olivia felt tension when it came to grading Martin's work because she felt it was not fair that he had multiple opportunities to complete his work (home and school), and several accommodations or choices, which he still refused. Since Martin did very little written work during the school day, Olivia sent all the work home in the evenings – this was part of the agreement between Olivia and Martin's parent, that any work he did not complete during the

school day would go home to be finished and brought back so he could follow through. However, Olivia did not believe it was fair that she should give Martin the same grades she gave his peers when they did not have the same accommodations. She said,

> I have things that I grade that kids do in the classroom that [other] kids don't get to take home, what you get for class time to finish, to show me what you learn, what you know, then I grade it. And…he shouldn't actually get to bring that home because mom wasn't in class and nobody else gets to bring it home to pretty it up. He'd still get almost all A's and B+'s but he really wasn't doing any of the work at school.

In the end, Olivia gave Martin grades based on the work he turned in, but she continuously held it in tension with her belief that it was not fair. A similar theme occurred when Olivia talked about the team's process for making an accommodation plan. After Martin was ultimately diagnosed with ADHD, depression, and anxiety, the team wrote an accommodation plan which provided alternatives for written assignments (such as dictation, speaking answers, or typing) and allowed for having the option to bring schoolwork home so a parent could scribe. Olivia noted that she knew Martin was struggling and needed some accommodations, but she felt the extent the family had asked for was not fair. Olivia said, "It was exhausting…it was the longest [accommodation plan] we'd ever written at our school with accommodations of everything [Martin's] mom had wanted in there." Part of the tension that Olivia struggled with was the fact that she was responsible for Martin's accommodations at the same time she was responsible for the needs of the rest of the students. Giving him time to dictate answers or verbally explain writing assignments took her away from his peers, which she felt was unfair. She said,

> They want basically, me to be a teacher to all these other kids and all [these accommodations] for Martin. And I did it, and I said, "I'll do the best I can do because I

> always will give my best, but I don't agree with half the stuff that's in here." I felt like it was unreasonable to ask, and he's the smartest kid in the room.

In addition to Olivia's difficulty shifting her own expectations, she had a hard time mitigating when Martin's peers noted or responded Martin's behavior. When explaining Martin's peer's responses, Olivia said,

> All the other kids are supposed to be working and he refuses to pick up the pencil, and I'm just supposed to look away and give him three choices, and he won't do any of those and all the other kids are sitting there going, *why didn't he have to do [the work]?*…and what was a struggle for me because…I had these kids watching and going, *well it's working for him, he can take it and do it at home, why do I have to do [my work] now?*

Olivia did not have any good answers for Martin's peers because she acutely felt the unfairness and the effects it had on the other students. Another example of this occurred during partner work or group work in the classroom; Martin's peers would frequently refuse to work with him because he did not contribute or collaborate on assignments. When asked to give an example, Olivia described a partner reading assignment when Martin refused to read aloud. She said,

> "He wouldn't read aloud, and I'm like, "I'm not going to make a kid be a partner with that, so if you're not going to be a partner, you're on your own"...He'd start off with a partner, not do anything, the other partner is looking at me like, *Really? I gotta work with this kid?* and I'd give him another chance, [and] then I'd say, "You know what, if you're not going to be a partner, you gotta be a partner to have a partner, [so] I'm going to move [the other student] and let them join another group."

In addition to Martin's continued isolation from his peers during collaborative academic work, his peers started to withdraw during social parts of the day, too. Olivia described how she saw Martin's relationships with his peers change when,

> His peers were disengaging from him because he would be the baby on the playground if he didn't get his way. He would pout. He would throw things. He'd have a tantrum…They [were] seeing [Martin] in a different light, and they really [didn't] want to be around him. They [were] tiptoeing around him. Everybody tiptoed.

Similar to the difficulties with collaborative academic work, Oliva felt as though she did not have any good answers for Martin's peers. She was caught in the tension between knowing and respecting his struggles, but also addressing the needs of Martin's peers and the class as a whole.

Olivia's care for Martin's success and relationships and her push that for him to get help alongside her strain with adjusting her expectations and providing accommodations is her own entanglement of the restorative and punitive paradigms. When this is considered alongside lines of flight provided by Catholic social doctrine, one finds space for a greater embodiment of the principle of solidarity and the Catholic preferential option for the poor. Taking a step back, it is important to note that Olivia did nothing to injure Martin's dignity; she cared for him and treated him with respect. She genuinely wanted to meet his needs and was determined to get to the bottom of his difficulty, and she provided the support she could within the system. However, if one follows a fleeing line of flight into a deeper and more comprehensive definition of dignity, perhaps that from Pope Francis that says the "meaning of dignity is that we are created for a fulfillment that can only be found in love (2020, §68), and that "love is more than just a series of benevolent actions…[and] only by cultivating this way of relating to one another will we make possible a social friendship" (2020, §94), then one might find more than can be done, or perhaps

done differently, for Martin. Acknowledging that Olivia did everything she could with what she had, Martin's difficulty participating in group work further isolated him from relationships with his peers, which started to manifest in other situations during the school day. Olivia's actions with Martin stop short of a fully restorative response because she did not give Martin or his peers the chance to return their relationship to a state of *rightness* or a chance to care for and meet each other's needs. Catholic social doctrine suggests that in working towards the common good, it is the Catholic duty to prioritize those who have the most needs, hence the *preferential option*. Pope Francis writes,

> If we, who are God's means of hearing the poor, turn deaf ears to this plea, we oppose the Father's will and his plan; that poor person "might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt" (Deuteronomy 15:9). A lack of solidarity towards his or her needs will directly affect our relationship with God: "For if in bitterness of soul he calls down a curse upon you, his Creator will hear his prayer" (Sirach 4:6). (2013, §187)

While Francis specifically uses the word "poor" when he talks about the preferential option, this is assumed to be representative of anyone who is marginalized because of their physical attributes, gender, personality, capacity, or gifts (Francis, 2020; Marshall, 2005). While Martin is a good example of an opportunity to embrace the Church's preferential option for the poor, the Church also acknowledges that there is no easy solution regarding how to do this (Second Vatican Council, 1965, §33; Gaillardetz, 2018). Recalling the definition of *rightness* and *justice,* the principles of subsidiarity and participation would ask that Martin, Olivia, and his peers have space to articulate their own needs and experiences and then collaboratively find ways to meet the needs of their classroom community in order to cultivate reconciliation, solidarity, and peace. It is possible (perhaps likely), that Olivia and the class would have never been able to fully meet

Martin's needs, but truly practicing solidarity in prioritizing Martin's needs may have had several desirable effects. Practicing solidarity in order to maintain right relationships may have ensured that Martin felt a sense of inclusion while his peers understood and respected the imbalance of Martin's needs compared to theirs. Allowing space for participation and collaboration may have helped Olivia feel less desperation and personal blame for not having a solution to Martin's problems. And, finally, a collective valuing of Martin's unique and greater needs may have provided a non-judgmental inclusive space for Martin to advocate, engage, and make use of his accommodations. As previously stated, it is possible (nay likely), that Catholic education would not have had the resources to support Martin, but Catholic social doctrine calls for Catholic education to *try*, because,

> It is good for us to appeal to the 'solidity' born of the consciousness that we are responsible for the fragility of others as we strive to build a common future. Solidarity finds concrete expression in service…and…[i]n offering such service, individuals learn to "set aside their own wishes and desires, their pursuit of power, before the concrete gaze of those who are most vulnerable…Service always looks to their faces, touches their flesh, senses their closeness and even, in some cases, 'suffers' that closeness and tries to help them." (Francis, 2020, §115)

Entangling and Fleeing: Conclusions

Both Olivia's and Justine's experiences are evidence of a tension between restorative and punitive: one student versus all the students, holding high expectations versus flexibility, and universal consequences versus meaningful consequences. As Vagle (2018) says, in post-intentional phenomenological research, "We…aim to enter the middle of deeply entangled contexts of educational moments, where our theorizing can be conceived as key spaces of

production in which bodies (literally and figuratively) are consequentially marked, violated, disciplined, *and* celebrated, honored, and nurtured" (p. 129). Vagle deeply emphasizes the concept of ***and*** as part of both post-intentional phenomenology and post-structuralism. It is here, in the ***and*** of both Justine's and Olivia's experiences, where dialectical tension becomes something that both produces a traditional punitive response that says one child should not be allowed to disrupt or take from the learning of others through their disruptive behavior ***and*** provokes a line of a flight that centers the preferential option for that vulnerable student.

Does this suggest that Olivia should have disregarded her expectations for Martin and allowed him to continue disrupting the class? No. Does it invite Catholic educators to think about how traditional ways of being in Catholic education might make it hard to meet the needs of an inclusive population? Yes.

Does this suggest that Justine's use of the stoplight system and the golden tickets are wrong and that students should never have consequences or never be rewarded? No. Does it invite Catholic educators to consider how behavior affects others and consider how solidarity and care for the common good might inform healing toward right relationships? Yes.

Does this suggest that Catholic educators should not hold high expectations for students? No. Does it invite Catholic educators to consider the implications of high expectations, and consider the inclusive supports needed to either meet those expectations or demonstrate flexibility in those expectations? Yes.

Does this suggest that Catholic educators should ignore the problematic behaviors of their students and that there should be no conseuqences? No. Does it invite Catholic educators to consider their response to behavior in the context of right relationships, the common good, and solidarity? Yes.

Catholic education has a high calling, and if one considers the duty to a skill paradigm in addition to the importance of academic achievement, the road is narrow and the hill is steep. Creating Pope Francis's *Culture of Encounter* requires that educators and students alike learn to see and honor each other's experiences in a way that provides space for solidarity in acknowledging and caring for each other's needs. Following this line of flight from the posts of Catholic social doctrine and restorative practices provides Catholic education an opportunity to become more true to itself, for,

> Education is not given for the purpose of gaining power but as an aid towards a fuller understanding of, and communion with man, events, and things. Knowledge is not to be considered as a means of material prosperity and success but as a call to serve and to be responsible for others. (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, §56)

Chapter Five: Discussion, Limitations, and Implications

In the K-12 classroom, as a microcosm of society, traditional discipline practices that generally include punitive or zero-tolerance responses to student rule-breaking behavior are linked with later negative outcomes, including delinquency (Gerlinger et al., 2021), physical aggression (L'Écuyer et al., 2021), not graduating (Fabelo et al., 2011), academic failure (Bleakley & Bleakley, 2019; Kline, 2016) and contact with the juvenile justice system (Fabelo et al., 2011). Furthermore, the data on exclusionary practices for students of color, disabled students, and students qualifying for free and reduced lunch is even more disparate (Kervick et al., 2020; Kline, 2016; Brent, 2019; Mallett, 2016). While the intention of these punitive, zero-tolerance responses to rule-breaking behavior in schools is to both encourage compliance by threat of consequence and also deter further problematic behavior, the data begs the question that perhaps these approaches are doing more harm than good. As an alternative to punitive and exclusionary practices in criminal justice, restorative justice, based in Indigenous traditions, is a practice that seeks to ask who was hurt and how the harm can be repaired. Instead of using only punitive punishment for breaking the law, restorative justice provides victims and offenders an opportunity to dialogue and come to a greater understanding of the effects of the harm done before providing opportunities for healing (Cross, et al., 2019; Zehr, 2002). Several studies that have examined the effects of restorative justice on school suspensions have found encouraging results, suggesting restorative justice interventions might be an effective alternative to suspension and a way to keep kids in school (Anyon et al., 2014; Augustine, et al., 2018; Hashim, et al., 2018). In addition, several studies that have examined the effects of restorative practices have found positive effects on school culture, staff mindsets, an increase in empathy, an

increase in social skills, and positive changes in teacher/student and student/student relationships (Kehoe, et al., 2018; Reimer, 2020).

More specifically, there has been little to no research on the use of restorative justice in Catholic education or how Catholic social doctrine can inform the work of educators with student behavior. On the heels of the Catholic Church's use of restorative justice to help bring healing in the wake of the clergy abuse crisis (Griffith, 2020; Morneau, 2019) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops's (2016) suggestion that a restorative approach to criminal justice is more in line with the social teachings of the Church than a retributive approach, it is a natural extension to wonder how restorative justice and Catholic social doctrine could inform educators' responses to problematic behavior in the K-12 classroom. On the surface, these may seem unrelated, but if one considers the K-12 classroom as a microcosm of society, one sees an opportunity to provide space for students to develop the skills to solve conflicts and build a community of right relationships. While a crime in society that warrants imprisonment might be much more significant than a disruptive student in an elementary classroom, both are fractures in the thread of the common good and call for a response that values students as participants in creating a classroom community that mimics the call for Catholics to live the teachings of Catholic social doctrine. To that end, the purpose of this study was to examine how teachers' responses to problematic behavior come to be, considering the ever-shifting nature of problematic behavior and the ever-changing influences in the classroom. Furthermore, this study aligned the common themes that exist between restorative practices and Catholic social doctrine and explored the lines of flight available for Catholic educators. This paper sought to answer these research questions:

- How might responses to problematic student behavior come to be for educators in Catholic elementary school classrooms?
- To what extent do Catholic social doctrine themes and restorative justice principles inform teachers' responses to problematic student behavior?

Lines of Flight: Invitations to Move Forward

Limitations to This Research Study

Before moving to practical implications from the fleeing and entangled lines of flight that came from this study, it is helpful here to pause and name the limitations of this current study and how future research might be helpful. Perhaps one of the greatest limitations to this current study is the participant group, both in size and type. Both teachers in this study were female, white, and taught in the same suburban Catholic school. Additionally, only two participants were used. In order to truly understand the meaningful connectednesses that are socially constructed around problematic student behavior and to better understand the entanglement of restorative and punitive mindsets, it is critical that further research invite more voices into the conversation; this includes not only more teachers (i.e. a greater number of research participants), but also other voices in both role and background. Administrators, parents, paraprofessionals, specialist teachers, interventionists, school counselors, and priests/deacons/school chaplains, etc., all intersect with problematic student behavior during their day, and their lived experiences and connectednesses are important because they interact with students in different ways and for different reasons. Similarly, this study only included elementary teachers; preschool, middle school, high school, and post-secondary individuals also have important and valuable lived experiences that are worth capturing. Additionally, this study was primarily situated in a white Western understanding of Catholicism and educational culture, and because white teachers may

bring a specific bias on student behavior, a critical future area of research is the experiences of teachers of color and Indigenous teachers, both in the United States, and elsewhere; various cultural backgrounds and different interpretations of what it means to be Catholic in the world might yield different meaningful connectednesses and lines of flight. Finally, perhaps more important than any other voice, though, is that of the child. A powerful future area of research should be how problematic behavior comes to be for students and their peers. If the work of Catholic education is to honor and center the voice of the most vulnerable, the child, then their voices must be valued in further research. What do they consider to be problematic behavior? Why do these behaviors happen? Where are the (if there are) unmet needs? What is the skill gap? What is their experience of their classroom? What is their experience of their own behavior and their peers' behaviors? How do students view conflict, and how do they want to solve it?

Another significant limitation in this study was the time. This research was limited to only one interview and one written Lived Experience Description per participant. This made it impossible to follow up with the participants in order to better understand both their lived experiences and their meaningful connectednesses. This study was simply a snapshot in time of the enduring, twisting, fleeing, constructing, and ever-producing and provoking experience teachers have multiple times a day, if not an hour. Further research might include a longitudinal study that invites participants to continue coming back to explore their own lived experiences over and over again in order to grow more true to their calling as a Catholic educator. Structuring phenomenological research in an action-sensitive (van Manen, 1997) way provides space for not only the research community to continue understanding the lived experiences of teachers, but it would provide teachers (and other research participants) an outlet to better understand their own experiences.

Implications for Practitioners and Researchers

As was seen in the findings section of this paper, educators' experiences with problematic behavior and the corresponding responses are not static; a teacher's emotional, physical, mental, and social response to problematic behavior might depend on the educator's knowledge of how the student will respond, the opinion of the child's parents or the teacher's colleagues, the teacher's philosophy of behavior, the school discipline policies, how the teacher would want his/her own children to be treated by their teachers, etc. The phenomena of responding to problematic behavior is, using Vagle's (2018) words, one that "seeks to flee through and across different contexts of disorienting dilemmas" (p. 47). Vagle's post-intentional phenomenology was the research methodology used for this study; phenomenological philosophy, theories, and methods all posit that the human cannot be removed from the world and are interested in researching the phenomena and the resulting interconnectedness, or intentionality. Intentionality is, as framed by Vagle (2018), "the meaningful connectedness with the world" (p. 129). In the context of this research, intentionality is conceptualized with the post-structural concept of *lines of flight*; Vagle (2018) explains that a line of flight, as used post-structurally, is meant to represent concepts such as fleeing, flowing, swelling, or taking off (p. 128–129). When anchored in Catholic social doctrine, educators' lived experiences, and restorative practices theories, it is precisely this fleeing, flowing, and taking off that invites Catholic educators to think more critically about how their classrooms can become more true to the Catholic way of being and knowing; this critical thinking allows for researchers and educators together to better imbue thoughtfulness and intentional authenticity into Catholic education. Catholic education has the entirety of Catholic social doctrine to influence and guide this thoughtfulness, and this research study has sought to start that process by both beginning to better understand the meaningful

connectednesses in Catholic educators' response to behavior and also exploring the lines of flight suggested by the alignment of Catholic social doctrine and restorative practices. As van Manen (1997) says, "Phenomenological research has, as its ultimate aim, the fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are" (p. 12). There is no more important aim of Catholic education than to help students and teachers become more fully who they are in the image and likeness of God.

The remaining portion of this chapter will summarize the findings of this research in a way that uses the entangled and fleeing lines of flight to provide practical implications for both Catholic educators and researchers. Recalling that the purpose of phenomenological research is not to produce results that can be generalized, a summary of the findings and implications for this study are provided below, with the caveat that each reader brings to this study their own personal context, beliefs, values and intentionalities. It is expected that these findings and implications do not provide predictable, directional results as quantitative studies do, but instead the hope is that readers feel invited to absorb and apply these findings to their life and work in an unstable and shifting way, with their own unique meaningful connectednesses.

In seeking to answer the research question about restorative practices and Catholic social doctrine, it was found that both restorative practices and the social teachings of the Catholic church are rooted in the same place: the inherent dignity and worth of the human. For the Church, this means that humans are called to be in right relationship with God, self, and others via the principals of Catholic social doctrine, including solidarity, participation, subsidiarity, and the common good. Having strong relationships with students, families, and the community was something emphasized by both Justine and Olivia, but this line of flight invites Catholic education to consider the importance of authentic relationships in a school classroom as a

microcosm of society. This does not simply mean getting along with each other and respecting each other; rather, right relationships, rooted in Biblical justice, means a duty to care for each other and a duty to right wrongs through solidarity, reconciliation, and peace. The principles of subsidiarity and participation invite educators to consider the importance of student voices in this, suggesting that all parties (including perhaps the student who demonstrated the behaviors, a peer who was hurt, bystander peers, and perhaps the teacher) should be involved in articulating and repairing harm. Pope Francis reminds educators that, "Each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable" (2020, §215).

Educators, administrators, and all who promulgate the faith in Catholic schools have a clear duty to teach the principles of Catholic social doctrine, and while curriculum and direct lessons that cover this content is important, it is not enough that Catholic schools simply *teach* about the demands of justice; rather, educational practitioners (teachers, administrators, assistants, coaches, etc.) must *practice* justice within the classroom and school community (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, §58), including nurturing participation and active living of the Church's social teachings in order to create more dialogue and more openness in a culture of inclusion (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014). Practically speaking, restorative practices offers proactive relationship-building circles as a way to both nurture authentic relationships and a sense of inclusion in a structured way while also teaching the foundation and skills for later problem solving conversations and restorative conversations. Using a purposeful morning meeting time, teaching relationship skills, and nurturing listening skills are all foundational to creating and maintaining right relationships between students. Relatedly, higher education and the research community can work to build the principles of participation, solidarity, subsidiarity, and common good into teacher preparation programs.

Modelling these processes in teacher preparation programs would give preservice teachers their own lived experience and skills before they are expected to nurture or model for young people. This might look like providing training in practices that build relationships and allow for participation in restoring relationships after problematic behavior, implementing natural consequences, and opportunities to value the student voice. Finally, recalling that neither Justine nor Olivia could identify or articulate how they use the teachings of the Church in their classrooms, both higher education and Catholic education may benefit from taking a closer look at how they develop teachers' understanding of Catholic social doctrine. Teachers cannot teach what they do not know, and more than anything else Catholic education needs to know who and what it is; if Catholic educators are expected to help students *do justice* and *be Catholic* in the world, it is imperative they have the skills to help nurture and facilitate this learning themselves, in their own classrooms, for, as Pope Francis (2020) says,

> I cannot truly encounter another unless I stand on firm foundations, for it is on the basis of these that I can accept the gift the other brings and in turn offer an authentic gift of my own. I can welcome others who are different and value the unique contribution they have to make, only if I am rooted in my own people and culture. (§143)

A related area of research to consider is whether or not to develop ways to measure the principles of common good, subsidiarity, solidarity, participation, and, if they are to be measured, then how? The Congregation for Catholic Education (2014, section 4) suggests measurement is important because it gets Catholic education closer to our values, while the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) reminds educators that "The validity of the educational results of a Catholic school…cannot be measured by immediate efficiency…not only is the freedom-factor

of teacher and pupil relationship with each other to be considered, but also the factor of grace" (§84). This tension is an area to be developed with further research.

Another line of flight from the current research swelled from the place of how educators, the Church, and restorative practices might think about, and thus address, problematic student behavior. The entanglement of punitive practice and restorative practices was evident in Justine and Olivia's stories, and while research has suggested that mixing the two does not yield positive results (Reimer, 2019; Brent, 2020), the lived experiences of Justine and Olivia call attention to just how hard this duality is. Justine and Olivia's lived experiences suggest that perhaps the punitive and restorative paradigms are too simple, too dualistic, too posted, too binary, or too unbending. Additional research moving forward needs to explore in more depth the experiences of Catholic educators and students with both restorative and punitive practices, including the experiences of teachers who shift between mindsets, have changed mindsets, and have stayed mostly situated in one mindset. A greater understanding of how these changes happen in light of the teachings of the Church can help Catholic education nurture future growth and development. Additionally, in light of the Congregation for Catholic Education's (2014) *skill paradigm* and restorative practices' positing that behavior is a *skill gap* and/or a *need gap*, perhaps one of the most challenging lines of flight to come from Justine and Olivia's experiences is the invitation for Catholic education to consider acknowledging problematic behavior through a skill or need lens. Recalling that the definition of *justice* used in this thesis is having *rightness* in relationships and giving people their due, this means honoring that student misbehavior is a need gap or a skill gap, which asks educators to either seek to meet the need or teach the skill instead of simply disciplining the behavior. This includes using natural consequences for behavior that do not isolate or exclude students and ensuring that the implementation of natural consequences

happens in a way that both protects all students' dignity and also either maintains right relationships or provides space for healing and forgiveness. While Catholic education as it currently exists has limitations in who it can serve and support, Catholic social doctrine and the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable make a strong plea to consider the right of each and every learner to a Catholic education, for,

> Those who find themselves in greater difficulties, who are poorer, more fragile or needy, should not be seen as a burden or obstacle, but as the most important students, who should be at the center of schools' attention and concerns. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014, §5)

Similarly, an additional line of flight, rooted in the principles of subsidiarity and participation, invites Catholic educators to help students develop and use problem solving skills in order to care for one another and repair harm done after problematic student behavior. Recalling that the principle of subsidiarity asks leaders to allow people to do for themselves what they can, this, coupled with the principle of participation, challenges the typical notion of teacher or administrator as disciplinarian. This fleeing from individualism and authoritarian decision making is the crux of the culture of encounter, Pope Francis (2020) says, and considered in the current education application, then, student dignity can be fully realized when all students have a chance to see and love the other. Leaning on restorative practices for a practical application, circles to repair harm and/or restorative conversations between two or more individuals honors the dignity of the child(ren) because it gives space for their voices and their experiences by allowing all parties to talk about what they need and collaborate together to repair harm and care for each other. Fostering development that nurtures the skills needed to live true justice for the common good means that students learn skills for advocacy, cooperation, holding boundaries,

caring for one another, authenticity and vulnerability, dialogue, problem solving, and care (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014, section 2.1; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, §30). Additionally, allowing students to care for each other by both praying for and praying over their peers can strengthen their life of faith while also strengthening the classroom community. Catholic education has traditionally used the teacher and/or a school administrator or dean as the primary disciplinarian when determining consequences for student behavior. This more punitive approach is entangled with the restorative lines of flight that invite educators to involve the student voice in both talking about experiences and harm done and also seeking to repair it. A culture of encounter (Francis, 2020) invites educators to value both the voice of the student who was harmed and also the student who did the harm because the "path to social unity always entails acknowledging that others have…a legitimate point of view, something worthwhile to contribute, even if they were in error or acted badly" (§228). Instead of traditionally disciplining students based on the assumption that they choose to misbehave, this line of flight invites Catholic educators to not only listen to the voices of *all students,* but also value and honor all voices, together, in the process of better understanding problematic behavior and repairing harm to rebuild right relationships.

A final word about the use of restorative practices in this study is important here. Restorative justice/restorative practices as a framework or intervention was used here because of the Catholic Church's use of it to heal in the wake of the clergy abuse crisis (Griffith, 2020). If this approach can be a model for healing amongst adults, perhaps it can be a model for how to heal, care, and be with others through conflict for young people. But, in elementary education there are different models available to support teachers and schools in classroom management, skills instruction, and discipline, such as *Responsive Classroom*, *Next Step*, *Envoy*, *Conscious*

Discipline, *Nurtured Heart*, etc. Considering this, more research is needed in order to explore the extent to which these and other models line up with Catholic social doctrine. To what extent do they facilitate solidarity, participation, and common good? How and why do they value the student's voice? Do they seek to create a Catholic classroom as a microcosm of society? These programs for classroom management are helpful because they provide training and guidance for educators, and they provide common language and structured ways of thinking about responding to student behavior. When implemented in Catholic elementary school classrooms, researchers, administrators, and educators should know how to modify (if needed) and implement programs in a way that nurtures the Catholic principles of dignity, common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, and participation. If research indicates that a program that embodies all the tenets of Catholic social doctrine does not exist, further work could be around writing and piloting programs for supporting teachers in the why, what, and how of building a classroom culture based on the tenets of Catholic social doctrine.

Conclusion

The dearth of previous research into not only problematic behavior in Catholic elementary schools but also how teachers respond and the implications of Catholic social doctrine made it difficult to find a strong foundation for the current study. That said, given the explicit call from the Church to create a *Culture of Encounter* (Francis, 2020), and the slowing of Catholicism through increased individualism, continued research and exploring new ways of thinking are critical for Catholic education. Researching effective ways to create Catholic communities in the microcosm of a classroom is imperative and time sensitive. The lines of flight entangled in these research findings suggest a challenging way forward for many Catholic educators and, perhaps, for Catholic education as a whole; the work of opening hearts and minds

to follow these entangled lines of flight can, if educators let them, lead Catholic education to be a living embodiment of what it means to honor the dignity of the other through true participation and solidarity in pursuit of the common good. However, these ideas are not how Catholic education has traditionally thought about or responded to student problematic behavior, and changing mindsets is difficult. Indirectly, Pope Francis acknowledges this; in *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis (2020) speaks most about the world economy, immigration, and other international issues which might seem irrelevant, but if the K-12 classroom is a microcosm of society and the very place where young people learn to live as Catholics, then Catholic education has a duty to consider Pope Francis's words and think about new ways to meet the needs of its students and nurture a truly Catholic classroom. Pope Francis acknowledges,

> Certainly, all this calls for an alternative way of thinking. Without an attempt to enter into that way of thinking, what I am saying here will sound wildly unrealistic. On the other hand, if we accept the great principle that there are rights born of our inalienable human dignity, we can rise to the challenge of envisaging a new humanity…This is the true path of peace, not the senseless and myopic strategy of sowing fear and mistrust in the face of outside threats. For a real and lasting peace will only be possible "on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family." (2020, §127)

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Appendix A: Lived Experience Description Instructions

The following was sent to research participants to guide their written lived experience.

Dear Research Participant,

You are invited to write a direct account of one instance of problematic behavior in your classroom as you lived through it. I acknowledge that writing, and more specifically, writing about experiences, might not be smooth or easy for everyone; the purpose of this activity is not a polished or publishable text, rather it's an invitation to spend time thinking about and sitting with an experience you have had in your classroom. Writing a text such as this allows us as the authors to consider the experience more slowly, more thoughtfully, and perhaps in more detail than if we were speaking it or telling it aloud in conversation. I've provided more concrete directions below, but as an example, here I have provided a direct account of an experience as I've lived it: snowshoeing with my dog.

> I like to go snowshoeing at the golf course by my house. When I pull into the parking lot, my dog, Cora, always starts whining and pacing in the back of the car (it appears as though she knows exactly what we're going to do). Her anticipation matches mine. After I put my boots on and bundle up, I get Cora out of the car and put her harness on. I attach her harness to a waist leash that I wear, then I pick up my snowshoes and we walk towards the snowy golf course, away from the parking lot. I know Cora is excited because she incessantly pulls me the whole way there. When I stop to put my snowshoes on, she sits next to me, perhaps knowing that she just has to endure a few more moments by my side before she's free to run. I nearly always get frustrated putting my snowshoes on because one of the straps is broken; I chide myself because I could fix it, but alas, it's still broken. Once I get my snowshoes on and adjust my winter gear, Cora and I start walking. I love the feeling of floating on the snow; I feel uninhibited, not susceptible to the 'quicksand' of deep snow. What I love more, though, is the moment I unhook the leash from Cora's harness. When I move to unhook it, she drops her hind end ever so slightly as if to get ready to launch (perhaps knowing what's coming), perks up her ears, intently watches her surroundings, and waits until she feels the leash unhook. Then, in that split second, she's liberated, unfettered, loose – she runs as fast as she can through the open snow, caring not about the deepness, the coldness, or the achy muscles that will surely come in a few hours. As I watch her joyful run, I resume my snowshoeing. Climbing up the hills on the greens leaves me breathing harder, while going down the hills leaves me sliding through several feet of deep snow drifts, barely maintaining my balance. I mostly watch Cora as I'm walking because, compared to her, there's little else to see. I intentionally take in the beauty of the snow, the trees, and the sunshine, but what captures me most and makes me most happy is Cora. She runs from tree to tree in anticipation of an unsuspecting squirrel or a loose tree branch she can bring to me for fetch, and my heart feels like its swelling as I watch her joy. As I continue walking, I'm listening to the nearby freeway and feeling the cold fresh air in my nose. When my eyelashes or eyebrows start to freeze, I know then that the snow will start to build up on Cora's face and her whiskers eventually start to freeze; sometimes, too, the saliva from her running with an uninhibited tongue goes down the side of her neck and freezes. She

> doesn't care about these things, though, and her joy is evident when I yell, 'KISSES' from 30 yards away – she drops what she's doing and runs wide open (tongue out, ears back, mouth open) towards me to give me a slobbery, cold, and disgusting kiss. After about 45 minutes I can tell Cora is beginning to slow down her energetic attempts to navigate the deep snow, and I can feel the wind through my hat inside my ears. I hate that feeling – I know it's time to go when the insides of my ears get cold because it won't be long before my head will start to hurt (I'm well aware that a warmer hat would probably do the trick). By this time Cora and I have finished a loop of most of the golf course, and we're not far from the car; knowing this, Cora runs ahead of me towards the car and when I call her back to attach the leash, she simply sits down where she is. It's like she's saying, "I've already covered that ground, it's your turn to catch up." She waits patiently for me, and when I get to her and take my snowshoes off, I reattach the leash and we both walk slowly towards the car. I glory in feeling physically tired, but I delight most in the memory of Cora's joyful run, her flying tongue, and her wet kisses. Sometimes I wonder the true reason I snowshoe: for me, or for the dog?

Max van Manen, in his book *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (1997) makes the following suggestions for writing Lived Experience Descriptions:

- "You need to describe the experience as you live(d) through it. Avoid as much as possible causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations (p. 64)" In my description of snowshoeing, I tried to vividly recount my experience outside in the cold with the dog; I did not attempt to interpret any of my feelings or emotions.
- "Describe the experience from the inside, as it were; almost like a state of mind: the feelings, the mood, the emotions, etc. (p. 64)." When talking about snowshoeing, it was obvious to me that I got much joy from watching Cora, so I tried to recount all the parts that I experienced and how I felt about them.
- "Try to focus on an example of the experience which stands out for its vividness, or as it was the first time (p. 65)." I've snowshoed with my dog many times, so I recounted my most recent experience simply because it was vividly in my memory. As an educator writing about an instance of problematic behavior, though, you undoubtedly have many instances you could recount. I would recommend focusing on one that is vivid in your memory because it's either recent, or it was significant for you in some way. Pick one instance and describe the specific events that occurred with as much detail as you can.
- "Attend to how the body feels, how things smelled, how they sounded, etc. (p. 65)." In my description, I talk about my body in the cold and how the joyful emotions feel in my body. You might talk about a student's tone of voice, classroom sounds, what you saw, and/or what you felt in your body.

As much as possible, though, avoid interpreting or analyzing your experience. We'll do this together in the follow-up interview. Please let me know if you have any questions. With that, you are invited to write a direct account of an experience of problematic student behavior in your classroom as you lived through it.

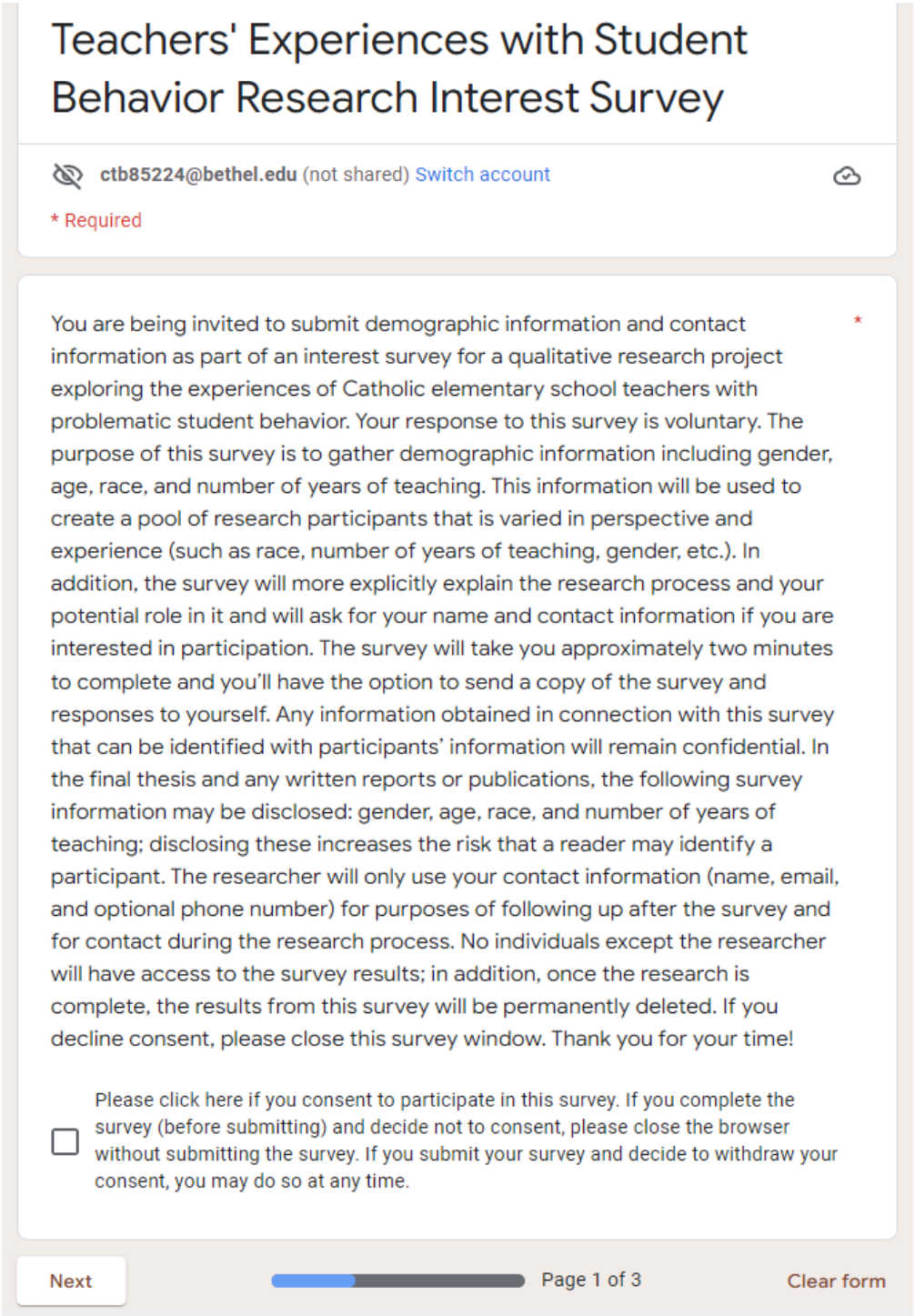
Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

The following are the semi-structured interview questions that were used as a basis for the participant interviews. It's helpful to note that most questions for the interviews were formulated based on what participants wrote in their Lived Experience Description. The following are sample questions.

1. Tell me about how you came to education and how you came to teach in a Catholic school?
    a. Follow-up if not provided in answer: Are you currently a practicing Catholic?
2. Tell me about problematic behavior in your classroom, specifically the behaviors you see and how you think about them.
    a. Possible follow up question: what experiences have you had that contribute to how you think about problematic behavior?
3. Tell me about how you respond to these behaviors.
    a. Possible follow-up question: what experiences have you had that contribute to how you respond to problematic student behavior?
4. Does Catholic Social Teaching influence how you respond to problematic student behavior?
5. Are you familiar with restorative justice?
    a. [If the participant answers no, I will provide a brief summary of restorative justice and its underlying themes before asking:] Are these themes present in how you respond to student behavior?
    b. If so, do the themes from restorative justice influence how you respond to student behavior?
6. You wrote about your experience responding to a student's repeated blurting out (for example) in the classroom; what was it like when this student was repeatedly blurting out in class?
7. You responded to this situation in three different ways: (for example) first, you talked to the student 1:1, then you asked her to take a break in the buddy room, then you sent her to the principal's office. Tell me about what influenced each of those decisions.
    a. Possible follow-up question: What was it like to respond with each of those decisions?
8. Was the outcome of your decisions what you wanted for the student and the classroom?
    a. If the participant answers yes and needs more prompting: What outcome did you desire and why do you think your response worked?
    b. If the participant answers no, then the follow-up question: What outcome do you want, and what prevents it from happening?
9. At the beginning, we talked about how you came to Catholic education and the experiences that have shaped how you respond to students in situations like this. Can you talk more specifically about the experiences and beliefs that contributed to your responses in this specific experience?

Appendix C: Participant Survey

The following are screenshots of the survey used to gather initial information from the research participants.



Teachers' Experiences with Student Behavior Research Interest Survey

ctb85224@bethel.edu (not shared) Switch account

* Required

You are being invited to submit demographic information and contact information as part of an interest survey for a qualitative research project exploring the experiences of Catholic elementary school teachers with problematic student behavior. Your response to this survey is voluntary. The purpose of this survey is to gather demographic information including gender, age, race, and number of years of teaching. This information will be used to create a pool of research participants that is varied in perspective and experience (such as race, number of years of teaching, gender, etc.). In addition, the survey will more explicitly explain the research process and your potential role in it and will ask for your name and contact information if you are interested in participation. The survey will take you approximately two minutes to complete and you'll have the option to send a copy of the survey and responses to yourself. Any information obtained in connection with this survey that can be identified with participants' information will remain confidential. In the final thesis and any written reports or publications, the following survey information may be disclosed: gender, age, race, and number of years of teaching; disclosing these increases the risk that a reader may identify a participant. The researcher will only use your contact information (name, email, and optional phone number) for purposes of following up after the survey and for contact during the research process. No individuals except the researcher will have access to the survey results; in addition, once the research is complete, the results from this survey will be permanently deleted. If you decline consent, please close this survey window. Thank you for your time! *

☐ Please click here if you consent to participate in this survey. If you complete the survey (before submitting) and decide not to consent, please close the browser without submitting the survey. If you submit your survey and decide to withdraw your consent, you may do so at any time.

Next Page 1 of 3 Clear form

Teachers' Experiences with Student Behavior Research Interest Survey

ctb85224@bethel.edu (not shared) Switch account

* Required

Research Participant Interest Questions

The first part of this survey will collect demographic information for the purposes of creating a varied pool of research participants with a variety of perspectives and experiences.

What is your name? *

Your answer

What grade/subject do you teach? *

Your answer

What school do you teach in? *

Your answer

How long have you been teaching? *

- ○ 1-5 Years
- ○ 6-10 Years
- ○ 11-15 Years
- ○ 16-20 Years
- ○ 20-25 Years
- ○ 25+ Years

What is your gender? *

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Prefer Not to Answer
- ○ Other: _____

What is your race? (check all that apply) *

- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ White
- ☐ Prefer Not to Answer
- ☐ Other: _____

What is your age? *

- ◯ 21-30
- ◯ 30-40
- ◯ 40-50
- ◯ 50-60
- ◯ 60-70
- ◯ Prefer Not to Answer

Research Participant Interest Questions

This research project is gathering experiential information from Catholic elementary school teachers on their experiences with problematic behavior and their responses to problematic behavior. The data gathering will occur in two parts (over approximately 2 weeks), and your time will be compensated by a $25 gift card. Interviews will take place over Zoom and will be recorded for transcription purposes only and will then be deleted; your name and any identifying information will be redacted and not provided in the final thesis.

Are you willing to provide a written description of one instance of problematic behavior in your classroom? This would take less than 30 minutes and would ask you to describe an experience of problematic behavior in your classroom and how you responded to it – a sample and more details will be provided. *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Other: _____

Are you willing to participate in a follow-up 60-minute interview to reflect on the experience you wrote about? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Other: _____

Do you prefer to be contacted via phone or email? Please provide contact information. *

Your answer

What days and times would be best for scheduling interviews? The researcher can be available during most day, evening, and weekend times. Check all that apply. *

- [ ] Morning
- [ ] Afternoon
- [ ] Evening
- [ ] Weekend
- [ ] Weekdays

If you are interested in the results from this research, a brief summary of findings can be provided. Do you have any questions for the researcher or about the research?

Your answer

Back Submit Page 3 of 3 Clear form

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This form was created inside of Bethel University. Report Abuse

Google Forms

Appendix D: Participant Consent Form

The following was provided to participants in order to gather consent for participation.

You are invited to participate in a study of your experiences with problematic student behaviors in your classroom. Through this study, I hope to learn how you respond to problematic student behavior and how those responses come to be, or, stated another way, the things that influence how you respond to student behavior. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you teach in a Catholic elementary school classroom and because of other factors that contribute to creating a group of participants that vary in age, years of experience, gender, and race. The research for this project is part of a master's thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Special Education at Bethel University.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to write a short description of an experience you have had with problematic student behavior in the classroom; I will provide a sample and more concise instructions, but your "lived experience description" is essentially a written description of a classroom situation that involved problematic student behavior, how you responded, and what it was like for you. Following this written description, I will interview you to better understand the influences on how your response to that student's behavior came to be. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes, and the written lived experience description will take approximately 30 minutes, with both items taking approximately 90 minutes time over the course of about two weeks. Benefits to participating in this research include deeper reflection into your work as a teacher and contribution to a growing body of research on student behavior in Catholic schools and the alignment of teacher responses' to behavior and Catholic Social Teaching and restorative justice. The purpose of this study is not to give you feedback on your work as a teacher, but rather to better understand what influences your work and your experiences in the classroom. With that, because teaching is deeply personal, I acknowledge that there may be some emotional discomfort in talking about your responses to student behavior in your classroom, and I am prepared to offer you a break, reschedule an interview, or suspend your participation if you so desire. When all three components of the research are completed, you will be offered a $25 gift card to a local bookstore or coffee shop as a token of gratitude for your participation.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. In any written reports or publications, no participants will be identified; if you need to be named in the research study for purposes of clarification or differentiation, pseudonyms will be used. If direct quotes from interviews are used, care will be taken to ensure that there is no identifiable information in the quote and again, a pseudonym will be used. Similar to quotes from interviews, your written lived experience description will not be included in its entirety in the final thesis, but if specific quotes are used, care will be taken to ensure that there is no situational information or characteristic information included that may be identifiable and thus disclose your identity or students' identities to readers. In any written reports or publications, your school site will not be specifically named, and the specific location/city will not be named. In addition, no affiliations you might have will be disclosed (including your schools), however, your age, gender, race, and total number of years of teaching will be disclosed, which can potentially inform or imply your

participation to readers, and you should be aware of this risk. The interview will occur virtually over Zoom, and those Zoom calls will be recorded. Once the Zoom call is finished, the audio and visual recordings will be retained for transcription purposes only and will be saved on my Microsoft One Drive account for the duration of the thesis. Once the transcriptions are completed and the final thesis is complete, all audio and video recordings will be deleted from cloud storage.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with your school in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting such relationships. This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel University's Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participants' rights or you wish to report a research related injury please call or email Caroline Becker (xxx-xxx-xxx, ctb85224@bethel.edu), Dr. Michael Lindstrom (xxx-xxx-xxx, m-lindstrom@bethel.edu), and Dr. Peter Jankowski (xxx-xxx-xxx, pjankows@bethel.edu).

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date