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The Business of Behavior: Appalachian Teachers' Experiences in using Positive Behavior Interventions and Support

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Abstract

The Business of Behavior: Appalachian Teachers' Experiences in using Positive Behavior

Interventions and Support

Erin Coffield

This dissertation explores the lived experiences of Appalachian elementary and middle school teachers who have been identified as working in Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) schools. This study used Lifeworld Theory to engage in discussion about the teachers' individual experiences in using PBIS in their classrooms in relation to resilience frameworks and childhood trauma. The teachers' individual experiences were analyzed using a Whole-Part-Whole analysis to bring the individual stories together to better understand how PBIS and childhood trauma are experienced in a specific Appalachian school. Discussion opens up through the participants' experiences about grit models in school, trauma their students have experienced, and how this is viewed in the school. Implications for policy and practice are discussed in relation to the findings.

Chapter 1 introduces the background of the study by highlighting definitions of Childhood Trauma and defining Appalachia as both a geographical and sociological place. Chapter 2 serves as a review of the literature on behavior interventions in schools, grit and resilience frameworks, and the Lifeworld Theory in which this study is rooted in. In Chapter 3, I discuss both case study and phenomenology as the methodological framework for the study of six participants situated within an Appalachian school district using PBIS as their behavior management system. Chapters 4 and 5 disseminate the data and experiences of the participants in how they have lived through the use of PBIS in their specific educational roles. Lastly, Chapter 6 serves as a discussion of the data and its policy, practical and methodological implications. Chapter 6 also discusses limitations of the study and the space for future research around restorative practices in schools regarding student behavior.

Keywords: PBIS, resilience, trauma, grit, capital, equity

To Angie, thank you for exploring Phenomenology with me and for your support. I'm glad we bonded over pierogis in class and stuck through this journey together.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Background

It is not an understatement to suggest that there is an adolescent mental health crisis in America. Many school-aged students are struggling with a mental health disorder such as anxiety or chronic stress caused by a traumatic event (Baweja et al., 2016; SAMHSA, 2021; Teich et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2007). These disorders may stem from a variety of causes, including living through traumatic experiences such as having an incarcerated parent, divorce, drug use in the home, death of a parent, or witnessing an accident (Alisic, 2012; Long et al., 2018; Rishel et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2007). Unfortunately, limited research, gaps in policy, and access to mental health care often result in numerous adolescent cases of mental health disorders remaining undiagnosed (Jensen, 2020). Pervasive gaps in educational policy and research that exist within the mental health field exacerbate adolescents' challenges (Williams et al., 2007). In this chapter, I share my story and explain the background about what schools have begun to do to support adolescents' mental health in the Appalachian context. In this chapter, I will also outline the role of teachers in adolescent mental health, and the use of various interventions used in school for behavior management and social-emotional learning skills. I will discuss literature surrounding the perspectives of Appalachia that are widely discussed, including stereotypical narratives of the region. Lastly, I will discuss the access to mental health in the region and how this affects students who may have suffered from or are currently suffering from a traumatic experience or stressful event in their life.

Teachers' Roles in Supporting Adolescents' Mental Health

My Story

As a middle school teacher, I have had the opportunity to build relationships with hundreds of students throughout my career. My interest in the following research stems from a specific year in my career where I worked with many students exhibiting signs of trauma in the classroom. These experiences allowed me to reflect on how students who experience situations like drug use in the home, incarcerated parents, or other traumatic events develop both academically and emotionally, as well as the impact that these events could have on their futures. These students, from my personal experiences, struggled with academics, staying awake, and maintaining positive relationships with peers and school staff members. Noticing these tendencies, I began feeling drawn to understand student mental health and how schools, specifically schools in rural Appalachia, respond to youth mental health and in school services for students. My place of employment at the time used the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study (Felitti et al., 1998) through professional development sessions to prepare teachers and staff, and to help them better understand the lasting effects of childhood mental health. This training in ACE awareness coincided with implementing a new school-wide behavior model.

Throughout my teaching career, I have been exposed to different behavioral management models and school-wide social-emotional learning plans. In West Virginia, all middle schools must teach at least 25 minutes a week of a social-emotional program to their students during an advisory period (WV Code 2520). When learning about the ACE Study, my place of employment implemented the PBIS program and included other social-emotional learning programs such as the "Growth Mindset" approach by Carol Dweck (2007). The Growth Mindset is a theory that states humans can do anything they set their mind to with hard work and perseverance; that with a mindset telling oneself that anything is possible (Dweck, 2007). An

individual with a growth mindset, according to Dweck, would not let minor setbacks affect whether they would strive to be successful in the future, and would recognize that their abilities are not finite (Morin, 2019). It is with "hard work, good strategies and input from others" (Harvard Business Review, 2016, n.p) that a growth-minded person will be able to succeed whereas a fixed minded person believes their talents are "innate" (Harvard Business Review, 2016, n.p.) and will often look for flaws in others to place blame (Dweck, 2007). In my own experiences, the idea of just "pushing through" was a part of my own development and was seen in the schools I have worked in to encourage students to work hard to reach an achievement, usually that achievement being academic or abiding by the expectations placed on them. The use of the Growth Mindset has been growing in schools since its debut in 2007. Growth Mindset uses positive language and the idea that all students can accomplish anything that they want with "perseverance and passion" that will lead to the "grit" to get through the challenges of learning new things and the experiences of failure that may accompany it, schools have been eager to put the positive outcomes into practice given their charge to produce learning outcomes (Duckworth, 2007; Dweck, 2007). These school-wide social-emotional learning programs such as Growth Mindset often involve school-wide behavioral expectations so that students conceivably learn to regulate their emotions in the current environment. These behavior programs are meant to cut down on behavioral interruptions, suspensions, and office referrals (Horner & Sugai, 2015).

The interest in using school-wide PBIS alongside other evidence-based preventative programs has increased in recent years (Domitrovich et al., 2010). Currently, studies about the integration of PBIS with social- emotional learning programs are being conducted in elementary schools (Bradshaw et al., 2013).

Typically, school wide behavioral management programs directly teach students the expectations and behavioral norms of the school environment (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013). There are many programs that have been designed and implemented in schools such as Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Schools (CBTIS), and Trauma Informed Elementary Schools (TIES) (Baweja et al., 2016; Eiraldi et al., 2019; Rishel et al., 2019). Some have yielded valuable and long-term results, while others fell short before the entire implementation process was finalized (Berzin et al., 2011; Eiraldi et al., 2019, Tyre & Feuerborn, 2021). These plans and models are typically designed to boost students' engagement and allow for their social and emotional growth throughout the academic year. These programs, specifically PBIS, address behavior as a school-wide approach and thus often have a blanket statement of rules for all students to follow without consideration of cultural, ethnic, and religious differences amongst our students. Additionally, the trauma that our students face can impact their understanding and ability to conform to many expectations within the school setting. As an educator who identifies as a White, Christian female, I find it important to also identify the roots that many of these programs hold in White, evangelical belief systems. Though in my personal life and throughout my own development many of the expectations I followed had value and roots in the morality of Christianty, it is important to recognize the importance of the separation of church and state to allow for the religious and cultural differences amongst the student population.

Below, I describe each of the support models in some detail, followed by a summary table of key features (Table 1). These models are often included within a social-emotional learning program, but each district or school will select a different program. In chapter two of

this paper, I will discuss some frequently used social-emotional learning programs that use or are influenced by the Growth Mindset (Dweck, 2007) or a Grit framework (Duckworth, 2007).

Table 1

Social-Emotional Support Models

Program	Key Features	Implementation	Efficacy
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	- Multi-Tiered - Incentive Based - Addresses the "most common behavioral disorders" (Eiraldi et al., 2019).	- Takes years to fully implement - Starts with "universal" school wide model	- When all parts are effectively enforced, the outcomes are positive in decreasing suspensions and office referrals (Horner & Sugai, 2015) - Can take years to properly execute
Cognitive Behavioral Integration for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)	School-based clinicians delivering services	- Implemented during the school day, can interrupt school schedules - Students go through a 10-week workshop with clinicians	- Improves symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Berzin et Al., 2011) - Lacks teacher "buy in"
Trauma Informed Elementary Schools (TIES)	- Early intervention for young children - Identifying trauma at a young age	- Liaisons working in classroom with teachers for support - Pilot study, executed in small setting	Significant growth in both emotional support and classroom organization (Rishel et al., 2019)

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

PBIS, the program of focus in this study, is used in many schools to reinforce positive behaviors as established by leadership within the school. It works on a multi-tiered system of

support (MTSS) for students who are not "successful" in the universal level of intervention to work through tiers two and three with trained professionals to better manage their behaviors at school (Baweja et al., 2016; Berzin et al., 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Horner & Sugai, 2015). It is one of the most widely used behavioral support programs used in the US. As of 2018, 25,000 schools in the United States implemented School-Wide PBIS (SWPBIS). PBIS is a school-based approach that is said to be compatible with Evidence Based Practices (EBP's) to support students with the most common behavioral disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Conduct Disorder, or anxiety disorders (Baweja et al., 2016, Landrum, 2017). EBPs are "derived from or informed by objective evidence—most commonly, educational research or metrics of school, teacher, and student performance" (OESE, 2020, n.p.).

The multi-tiered PBIS approach utilizes many members of the school community including administrators, educators, counselors, parents, and outside educational stakeholders for behavioral intervention. One main goal of the PBIS program is to minimize the number of office referrals made by educational professionals (Eiraldi et al., 2019; Horner & Sugai, 2015; Ringstein et al., 2003). The PBIS system is composed of three tiers with varying interaction levels. Tier 1, the *universal* level, involves and supports all students within a school population to grow and develop together and prevent future problems. Tier 2, or *targeted* support, does not encompass all students but works with a smaller population who have "skill deficits" and need direct support and feedback to "benefit from core programs at school" (PBIS, 2021, n.p.). Tier 3, or *intense/individualized prevention,* is the most rigorous level and applies to a select few students within a school system. This tier utilizes formal assessments to create the intervention they need to "benefit from core programs at school" (Tiered Framework, PBIS, 2021 n.p.)

In the literature, it is evident that without proper implementation of the three tiers, there will be delays in the projected success rate of the program (Barrett et al., 2008; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2021). Success when measuring PBIS is calculated in the decline of office referrals and the improvement of individual student grades and academic performance (Barrett et. al, 2008). When looking at the PBIS implementation in West Virginia, the initial use of the PBIS program was as an alternative placement program, as derived from success evidence from a school district in Florida (WVPBIS, 2016). After being implemented in the initial alternative placement setting successfully, many schools from kindergarten through 12th grade in the same county were introduced to the PBIS program at their schools. The goal of spreading the PBIS program into the general public school population was to have a decrease in disruptive behaviors and office referrals while increasing student performance.

Expanding Social-Emotional Learning

Given the research on social-emotional programs in classrooms and their collaboration with behavioral MTSS, there are suggestions in the literature that these programs may be one way to begin to address students' mental health. With these suggestions, it makes sense to consider the expansion of such programs. One often overlooked way of addressing adolescents' mental health challenges is in using classroom teachers' wisdom to provide various kinds of support for these students. Because public educators directly interact with students throughout a normal school day, teachers are more sensitive to a student's "needs" pertaining to their academic performance and socioemotional interactions with their peers (Alisic et al., 2012; Berzin et al., 2011). Teachers spend an exponential amount of time with adolescents in the school setting and are often able to pick up on the needs of their students based on how they are performing academically in the classroom and socially and emotionally in the classroom environment with their peers (Alisic et al., 2012; Long et al., 2009; Ringstein, 2003; Walter,

2011). Though teachers may notice these patterns in their students and recognize the effects it is having on their academic and emotional growth, it is common for teachers not to know how to appropriately move forward to serve these students for their best interests (Alisic et al., 2012; Berzin et al., 2011). Teachers not only lack the general knowledge of mental health disabilities and the medical diagnosis and treatments of these things but also lack the confidence to adequately make the decisions that could ultimately help them grow and develop (Baweja et al., 2016; Berzin et al., 2011). Even with this lack of confidence to make decisions on issues, most teachers still recognize the need for mental health care on campus and the possible benefits and impacts it will have for their students as they progress in their adult life (Baweja et al., 2016; Rishel et al., 2019).

There are cautions and limitations to the expectation that teachers should always be the first line of defense towards detecting and supporting their students' mental health needs. Although teachers may inherently notice the behaviors of struggling students, they, unfortunately, lack formal mental health training of the type that social workers, counselors, and psychiatrists receive (Adelman & Taylor, 1999; Alisic, 2012; Williams et al., 2007). Recognizing these shortcomings, teachers call out to school support staff members for access to mental health care services for their students. With this, it is important to note that teachers must have an established and meaningful relationship with school support staff members to provide the best environment and path forward for their students (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013).

Though our school guidance counselors are trained in assisting students in crisis, it is unfortunate that in many situations, guidance counselors are not utilized to their full potential from a mental health practice point of view. Counselors are often utilized as an administrative figure in the building being tasked with jobs such as scheduling students for their next academic grade, scheduling college fairs, working with testing such as the SAT, and being a part of various

Special Education duties through the IEP process (Moyer, 2011). When considering working towards better connecting teachers and counselors, there must be consideration of the true day to day experiences of the counselors in our schools.

COVID-19 and Social-Emotional Learning

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, social-emotional learning has come to the forefront of educational policy and practice, as children are returning to school (Phelps & Sperry, 2020). In the age of face masks and social distancing and after missing significant classroom time beginning in mid-March of 2020, students have been at home, some without adult support and some suffering ongoing traumatic events in the home (Phelps & Sperry, 2020). The context of this study will be within the COVID-19 pandemic through different variants occurring and the context of school still shifting in and out of "normalcy" with quarantines, mask mandates, and social distancing within schools. The schools in this study also have dealt with mass amounts of staff turnover and administrative changes throughout the COVID-19 era.

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Context of the Study: Rural Appalachia

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Rural Appalachia is defined as a social, geographic, and political context that affects adolescents' mental health. Before going any further towards examining the challenge of adolescents' mental health in rural Appalachia, it is important to show what is meant by "rural" and "Appalachian" so that the constructs are meaningful towards understanding the issues at hand. Though there are rural parts of Appalachia, and the study context falls within that realm, there are non-rural regions within Appalachia. It is important to not conflate the two terms.

Defining Rural

> For the average American, rural is an abstract concept of rolling hills and farmland rather than a concrete definition. Thus, it can be a difficult task trying to define the term "rural" and an even harder task trying to explain it. (Census Bureau, 2010, n. p.)

Bringing definition to the word "rural" is a difficult task. Rural, as defined by the US Census Bureau is "any population, housing, or territory NOT in an urban area" (Census Bureau 2010, n. p.). Because "rural" spaces are defined in contrast to urban spaces, it is important to also understand the definitions of urbanized areas and non-metro areas that are in Appalachia and near rural places (Table 2 below).

Table 2

Populations of Urban and Non-urban Geographies

Urbanized Areas	Population of >50,000
Urban Clusters	Population >2,500 <50,000
Non-Metro Areas	Defined at a county level, these counties often have a mix of urban and rural areas.

(Census Bureau, 2010)

To better illuminate some of the issues that adolescents living in rural areas face, I describe some of those factors relevant to my study: rural school "success," rural school geography, the "brain drain" phenomenon, mental health care access, and rural students' psyches.

Rural School "Success"

In the context of public schools, rural schools are compared to urban and suburban school districts through measurements of success. To measure success, educational stakeholders and government officials typically look at adequate yearly progress (AYP) through test scores and benchmark assessments. Often, these assessments are broken down into categories involving demographics such as race, gender, socio-economic status, and special education identification. According to a 2011 Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) meeting, 19.7% of West

Virginia schools did not make AYP (ARC, 2011). Additionally, the National Assessment of Educational Progress tests that are given in math and reading to fourth-grade students showed that 28% of white students and 20% of Black students were proficient in mathematics while 26% of white students and 16% of Black students were proficient in reading (ARC, 2011).

Rural School Consolidation

Though there are benefits of living in a rural place, the rurality of these locations also brings challenges to individuals that specifically affect schools and overall student success. Within small schools, there are often smaller class sizes, which can benefit students (Huang & Howley, 1993; Lyson, 2002). However, small class size and enrollment can lead to consolidation as districts try to save money and improve quality by pooling resources. When schools are consolidated, the schools are often in more urbanized areas, which may lead to a higher population of certified teachers willing to work in the area, leaving the small communities behind (Peshkin, 1978). In West Virginia, over 300 schools were closed between 1990 and 2002, with more being added in the years to follow (Bard, Gardener & Wieland, 2006). For example, at one time in a rural county in North-Central West Virginia, there were 10 separate high schools that were open across small communities. Today, there is just one centralized high school (WV Public Radio, 2019).

Outside of the realm of education, schools also serve as a social and cultural place within the community (Lyson, 2002; Peshkin, 1978). In the communities where there are schools, the housing market is more stable, property values are higher, stores are more successful in maintaining business, and community involvement as a whole is greater (Lyson, 2002). With sports teams and other school activities being consolidated into more populous areas, the small town schools that close leave behind not just a vacant building, but a sense of community that

rallied behind the students in support. Another benefit of non-consolidated rural schools is a shorter commute for students to and from and shorter bus routes from districts. These affordances and challenges influence rural schools, and the schools also influence the textures of local rural places. Rural schools are often characterized by positive aspects such as an increased sense of community. When rural schools are closed or consolidated, often this sense of community can dwindle.

"Brain Drain"

Another challenge of rural Appalachian schools is the way they are perceived in other parts of the country. In some cases, rural students, particularly those who are working class, are often not held to the same standards in school that their middle class and urban peers are (Carr & Kefalas, 2009; Willis, 1977). A phenomenon known as the "brain drain" (Carr & Kefalas, 2009) shows that students stay in their rural homes instead of leaving for college and establishing a career in a more "successful" and urbanized area because their teachers sort and select who is capable of a better life outside of rural Appalachia (Carr & Kefalas, 2009). This mindset is another damaging narrative to the region of Appalachia as it reinforces the idea that success cannot be found for all people in these mountains. This idea continues to deteriorate the mental health of the people, specifically the young people, who live here.

Family cohesiveness is another stereotype of Appalachia, but this is not always taken with a negative connotation. In many ways, the family unit can be a positive trait of Appalachian people, one that can contribute to the "staying" (Carr & Kefalas, 2009; Hendrickson 2012). This, however, can complicate further the stereotypical narrative that individuals place on many Appalachian areas.

Mental Health Care Access

When we consider mental health amongst adolescents, it seems likely that rural places matter. Outside of the school environment, "prior research has shown that rural residents have a higher risk of being uninsured or of having private coverage through small group or individual plans that tend to be less comprehensive" (Ziller et al., 2010, p. 214). Furthermore, if receiving mental health care is too stigmatized by family or community members, or too expensive with the available health care options, people in the region will continue to live without these resources (Pas et al., 2016).

Openness To Mental Health Care

At times, even if there is access to mental health care, adolescents who are needing help may not seek it because of the stigma of asking for help, embarrassment of needing help, and trusting a new and unknown adult in their life (Radez et al., 2021). This exists in communities both in and out of school. Mental health care does not exist consistently in rural school communities, yet there is sometimes resistance to taking up and using the care that is available (Dray et. al, 2015).

As I have mentioned, rural places are in and of themselves diverse, and have their own cultures that vary by region. Because of my familiarity and proximity, I have selected rural Appalachia specifically as the region of interest for the study.

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Defining Appalachia

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Geography

First, Appalachia is seen primarily as a mountainous region of the US, named for its proximity to the Appalachian Mountain range, which stretches from New York in the north to Mississippi in the south and encompasses parts of 13 states (Figure 1). West Virginia, the

primary state of interest in my research, is wholly located in the Appalachian region (ARC, 2021).

Figure 1

Map of the Appalachian region
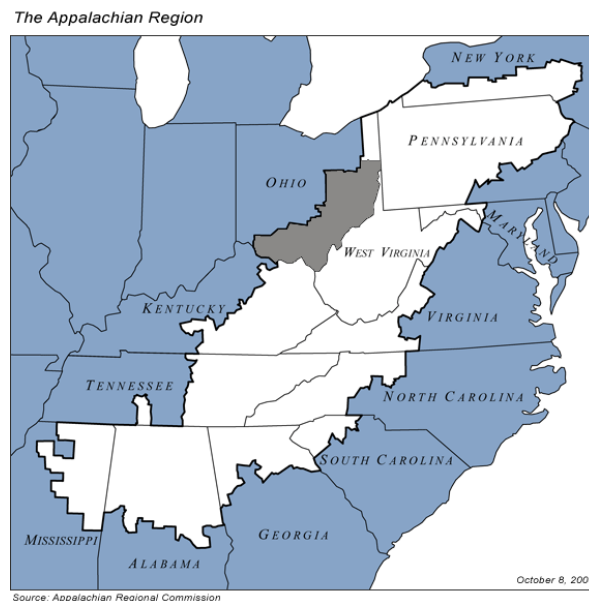
(Creative Commons, 2020)

Though this map gives a geographical definition to the Appalachian Region, there are still often arguments about where Appalachia is and what Appalachia is. In terms of the "where" of Appalachia, the region itself was defined politically around the geographic features of the Piedmont Plateau and the Appalachian Mountains (Collins, 2021).

Social Aspects of Appalachia

Social factors that seem to define Appalachia in the literature are broad and can often feed into the stereotypical narrative of the area involving poverty culture and the resistance to change (Walls & Billings, 1977). In the recent light of the bestselling book, *Hillbilly Elegy* (Vance, 2015), and its film counterpart (Howard, 2020), stories of Appalachia have continued to be perpetuated in a way that show the people who live here to be poor, uneducated, and having

no interest in asking for help or making their situation better for themselves. The Appalachia painted by these stories is also romanticized to create a story of self-reliance and pride in the ability to take care of oneself and one's own. These stereotypes are deeply rooted in the history of many Appalachian people. The circumstances the people found themselves in were not self-created out of pity and grit but instead were created by internal colonialism (Walls & Billings, 1997) and the active oppression of the people who made the region. In the 1930s under the Presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the creation of the New Deal, the plan for National Parks began to rise and the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps began to grow throughout the region. With the creation of the Shenandoah National Park, the people who lived and thrived in these communities were forced off the land through eminent domain or were left in the hills, separated from modern society (Catte, 2018). As people stayed and worked in these regions, the coal mining industry began to grow with populous and energetic mining towns popping up through the mid- and southern regions, specifically throughout Southern West Virginia. When the coal mines were open, the hard-working men were paid in company scrip, just to be left empty handed when the coal was gone, the mines shut down, and the financially sound coal barons up and left the community to suffer with nowhere to go and no "real" money [US Currency] to spend in the area or elsewhere (Timberlake, 1987).

Media Stereotypes

Romanticized narratives of the "mountain people" in the media have been perpetuated outside of *Hillbilly Elegy* into clownish humor such as the television series, *The Wild and Wonderful Whites of West Virginia*. This show perpetuates drug-addicted and methamphetamine strung-out caricatures of the White family, used as a stereotypical poster image for the region (Nitzberg, 2009). In a 20/20 special featuring Dianne Sawyer, *Children of the Mountain* (ABC

News, 2009), film crews followed families in Central Appalachia for two years, describing the "unthinkable conditions" and "toothlessness" of the region (ABC News, 2009). Though this was an attempt to show the ferocity of the grit in children in the "forgotten America," the special reinforced regional stereotypes of rampant drug use, homelessness, and being forced into labor such as the coal mines because there are no other options. I believe that this is a dangerous web to weave. These problems do exist in Appalachia, as they do in other regions of the United States. To say that homelessness and drug use do not exist would erase the stories of so many in the region, but to only supply one narrative of the grit and the cyclical tie to place in a negative connotation takes away from what the region has to offer and the positive things happening. To continue down the spiral of Appalachian people falling into cycles of poverty erases the need for structural assistance to allow growth away from systemic poverty and health issues.

Geographic Complexity

It is important to recognize that the Appalachian region and its people have long been the target of stereotypes that have caused trauma in their own right (Catte, 2018; Harkins & McCarroll, 2019). Thus, it is always important to consider the diversity of experiences amongst groups and individuals when discussing the research on this region. One misnomer is that Appalachia is a "rural" place. Indeed, only 107 of Appalachia's 420 counties are indeed classified as rural, and only 10% of the Appalachian population lives in a rural area (ARC, 2021). However, due to my experience and interest, this research is focused specifically in rural Appalachia, that is, those 107 counties mentioned. More specifically, it is bounded by the state of West Virginia and the school policies and practices related to social-emotional learning the state dictates. Since West Virginia is fully in Appalachia, and 34 of West Virginia's 55 counties can be considered rural (WV Health Care Authority, 1999), I am particularly interested in drawing

inferences from my research that will support those counties and other counties with similar social, cultural, economic, geographic, and state and local school policy contexts.

Now that I have explained the unique aspects of the region, and why they are important to understand regarding my study, I will explain the specifics of trauma and mental health amongst adolescents in the rural and Appalachian region.

Understanding Adolescents' Trauma and Mental Health in the Region

Why Adolescents May Experience Trauma

The word *trauma* has multiple meanings and contexts that include physical, mental, and sexual damage. Trauma of all types can have lasting effects on individuals, especially when it occurs during the developmental years of school-aged children (SAMHSA, 2021). According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), at least two-thirds (~ 67%) of children will report at least one traumatic event by the age of 16 (SAMHSA, 2021). Additionally, trauma can have lasting effects on the overall health and wellness of individuals into adulthood. Many school-aged students in rural Appalachia and elsewhere are struggling with a mental health disorder such as anxiety or chronic stress caused by a traumatic event (Alisic, 2012; Baweja et al., 2016; SAMHSA, 2021; Teich et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2007). These disorders may stem from a variety of causes, including living through traumatic experiences such as the death of a parent, having an incarcerated parent, experiencing divorce or drug use in the home, or even witnessing an accident (Long et al., 2018; Rishel et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2007). "In an epidemiological study in the United States, 54% of the 9- to 13-year-olds had been exposed to at least one traumatic event as defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" (Alisic et. al., 2011, p. 50). Traumatic exposure involves actual or threatened injury, death, or other threat to one's physical integrity (Alisic et al., 2011).

Stemming from traumatic exposure can be post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is characterized by overwhelming feelings of re-experiencing the traumatic event (e.g., nightmares and intrusive thoughts), by the avoidance of stimuli and emotional numbing (e.g., avoiding places related to the event and feeling detached from others), and by symptoms of hyperarousal, for example difficulty concentrating (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

ACE Study

The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study of 1990 has provided a building block for understanding the lasting effects of trauma on the mind and body, specifically when the trauma occurs in childhood. The ACE Study is divided into seven separate categories: "psychological, physical, or sexual abuse; violence against mother; or living with household members who were substance abusers, mentally ill or suicidal, or ever imprisoned" (Felitti, 2019, p. 774). The original study followed patients who had undergone a standard medical evaluation. These patients were sent a survey of the ACE Study Questionnaire about childhood abuse situations and other forms of household dysfunction (Felitti et al., 1998). The results of the study demonstrated that individuals who experience one or more traumatic events in childhood are at a higher risk for adult mortality and morbidities. Traumatic events in childhood and adolescence can lead to chronic stress or other mental health disorders such as anxiety or depression illustrated in Figure 2 below (Felitti et. al., 1998).

Figure 2

Examples of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) categorized by different influences (Felitti et al., 1998).

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                    Adverse Childhood Experiences
                              ACE
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Injury	Maternal Health	Chronic Disease	Opportunities
Traumatic Brain	Unintended		Education,
Injury, Fractures,	Pregnancy, Pregnancy	Cancer, Diabetes	Occupation,
Burns	Complications, Fetal		Income
	Death		

Mental Health	Infectious Disease	Risky Behaviors
Depression,		Alcohol,
Anxiety, Suicide,	HIV, STDs	Drug Abuse,
PTSD		Unsafe Sex

SAMHSA Study

     A study by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) demonstrated that nearly 67% of children will experience at least one traumatic event by the time they are eighteen years old (SAMHSA, 2020). Beyond the mental health disorders that can arise in their early years, children who experience multiple ACEs are at risk for multiple high-risk morbidities and mortalities in their adult life with instances such as depression, suicide, drug use, cancer, diabetes, and other life-threatening events outlined in Table 3 (Felitti et al., 1998).

Table 3

Examples of adverse childhood experiences

Experiences	Examples
Abuse	Physical, psychological, and emotional
Neglect	Physical and emotional
Violence	Intimate partner violence, mother treated violently
Substance Misuse	Parental household

| **Family** | Parental separation/divorce, incarcerated family member |

(Felitti et al., 1998)

While the Kaiser ACE study (1998) is broad, there are still instances of abuse and traumatic experiences, not discussed here. In some cases, PTSD and traumatic stress can stem from short-term events such as witnessing a vehicle accident or experiencing a large-scale disaster such as hurricanes or terrorist attacks such as the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 (Alisic, 2012; Jaycox, 2004). Other forms of adversity experienced in our society today include, but are not limited to, immigration, inadequate housing, food insecurity, or even language barriers within the school setting (Goodman, 2018). These situations often lead to great deals of perseverance and "grit" in students. Students must show grit in situations such as homelessness or food insecurity by having courage and strength. Grit may not always show itself through passion and perseverance as is framed in Growth Mindset or through passion to reach a goal (Duckworth, 2007; Dweck, 2007).

The two-thirds of school-aged students experiencing trauma or chronic stress in their lives would benefit from mental health programs. Unfortunately, effective and consistent mental health services are not always adequately available in schools, especially in rural regions where access to mental health care is already scarce (Alisic, 2012; Berzin et al., 2011; Pas et al., 2016). While some schools offer in-house medical care through outside mental health professionals working on or visiting campus (Baweja et al., 2016), many rely on MTSS such as CBTIS (Jaycox et al., 2004), TIES (Rishel et al., 2019), or PBIS (Baweja et al., 2013; Horner & Sugai, 2015; Ringstein et al., 2003).

The State of School-based Mental Health Interventions

Barriers to Using Intervention Models

Access and Efficiency Challenges

There are deficiencies in access to and execution of mental health care in schools, especially in rural Appalachian areas because of both distances geographically to mental health care facilities, bringing in employees to live in the area, and financial access to the necessary care (Ziller, 2010). Since these deficits exist in the communities where the schools are, often the school becomes a place where the students can receive these services (Schmidt et al., 2015). While some school systems utilize PBIS, there are still communities that suffer from the absence of mental health care programs in their schools. This is largely due to the lack of funding to the school and the lack of consistent support staff such as counselors or school psychologists. Since these professionals are often utilized in many ways, or are spread across multiple locations in a district, their expertise may be missed. Even when support systems enter the school, they may not be used efficiently due to factors such as financial strain, access to care, or because of an established school norm. In addition to these factors, these programs may lack crucial feedback and experiences from educators about how they perceive their students' behaviors.

Organizational Factors

Organizational factors clearly influence the access and efficiency concerns cited above. Comprehensive versus targeted approaches to intervention is one tension towards which mental health care access and efficiency becomes challenged in rural and Appalachian schools. Comprehensive intervention models approach mental health broadly, whereas targeted models approach mental health by a particular type or issue. School-based approaches to addressing trauma conflict because of the complicated web of funding streams, structures, and roles each

addressing mental health, but without the affordance of a coherent and comprehensive system of delivery and evaluation by mental health professionals.

For example, one challenging issue for schools is that students who have experienced trauma or chronic stress are often mislabeled as having Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), or other diagnoses that lead to a Special Education model instead of treating and understanding the trauma that the student has faced (Walkley & Cox, 2003). In fact, this mislabeling of mental health issues might be reinforced because federal funding for school mental health is already allocated in the special education budget. While some schools are using Trauma Informed Care (TIC) or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Schools (CBTIS) programs that focus generally on mental health, others are focused on specific instances of trauma such as physical and sexual assault (Gamache-Martin et al., 2010) or opiate use and addiction within the home (Rishel et al., 2019). When the already tight school budget is spread between two separate heuristics for approaching mental health and its effects, the programs, implementation, and effectiveness funds are often misused and blurred (Ringstein, 2003). This can be a problem for adolescents in rural Appalachia specifically because they may not have the opportunity to seek care outside of the school environment (Pas, 2015).

Another challenging issue for schools is that working class students from rural Appalachia may have a tendency to be over-disciplined by their middle-class teachers while not understanding why the discipline was occurring (Howley & Howley, 2004) which can lead to students' greater disdain for the school, their teachers, and the authority system generally speaking (Willis, 1977). These issues may be intensified when trauma and mental health issues are already present.

What Do We Need to Know?

The literature review for this study has suggested that classroom teachers may play a role in supporting their adolescent students' mental health, especially when backed up by a solid intervention system (Berzin et al., 2011). Such supports seem to be particularly needed in the rural and Appalachian context because of the lack of access to mental health care, the rising cases of opioid abuse, and the narrative of "grit" across the region (Rishel et al., 2019; Slone, 2020). Training teachers and teachers' relationships with support services colleagues are two promising areas of growth for the field.

Training

Though teachers may lack core knowledge on students' mental health concerns and issues, there is a case for teachers to receive training about their students' mental health disorders because of the amount of time teachers spend with them throughout a year. There are two major questions that arise from this issue: 1) How do we train teachers to be more fluent in these mental health concerns? and 2) How can we assure teacher buy-in to more training? (Alisic et al., 2012; Ringstein et al., 2003). Teachers are already overworked and heavily burdened by changing standards and topics in education. Additionally, teachers face constant resistance towards learning from their students, yet programs that yield dislike are continually being rolled out for their students. However, with appropriate planning and implementation, teachers will likely have more positive feedback for these programs and illuminate the need for a trauma care support program in their schools (Berzin et al., 2011; Eiraldi et al., 2019; Rishel et al., 2019; Walkley & Cox, 2003).

Relationships

      Another way that teachers can feel more adequately prepared for helping their students with mental health needs is to build stronger relationships with the school support staff members such as guidance counselors and social workers (Adelman & Taylor, 1999; Baweja et al., 2016). When teachers do not feel informed on an issue, they are less likely to report the issue (Baweja et al., 2016). Moreover, when situations involve potential students in crisis, this could be a dangerous space to work in. Conversely, if educators are comfortable with both their administration and support staff, they are more likely to write referrals for behavioral and emotional concerns of students, and thus start a tiered intervention process (Baweja et al., 2016).

      By making the referral and initiating the intervention process, a teacher has identified with their experience with the child that is exhibiting deviated emotional and/or behavior concerns that the teacher does not feel comfortable diagnosing and treating. In situations where the relationship is not as strong across the school-wide team, teachers are less likely to make the referral, which continues the downward path of the students' social-emotional health (Baweja et al., 2016). In fact, students who exhibit internal behavior concerns such as ADHD who are not appropriately treated in their youth are more likely to exhibit delinquent behaviors in their adult life and are at risk for health concerns such as alcohol abuse (Walkley & Cox, 2003; Williams et al., 2007).

      This study will be conducted as a case study with phenomenological analysis of the data collected. Using a case study methodology will provide insights into the teachers' lived experiences of utilizing PBIS with students who may have one or more Adverse Childhood Experience(s) (ACEs) such as trauma at home or toxic environmental stress (Duckworth 2007; Felitti et al., 1998; Walkley & Cox, 2003). This study will benefit the field by critically reviewing teachers' experiences at a rural West Virginian school. Furthermore, by better

understanding the attitudes of rural and Appalachian teachers in difficult situations with their students, we can anticipate challenges and thus better prepare current and future teachers and support staff for PBIS.

Chapter Two: Statement of the Problem

Significance of the Research

"Lifeworlds" refers to the ways in which the teachers in this research and their students understood, experienced, and created their lives together in school classrooms (Dahlberg, 2008) affected by training and relationships of the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) model (Horner & Sugai, 2015). Lifeworlds as a theoretical lens illuminated how teachers' and children's rural Appalachian experiences, such as trauma, were affected by the push towards the surveillance of "gritty" identities expected within the PBIS model that were cacophonic with Appalachian identity stereotypes and the "universal" child cultivated within the PBIS model. Lifeworlds were shaped by these constraints and a lack of attention to social welfare and educational resource concerns; yet in the research, teachers and youth exhibited complex agency and oppression within the webs of trauma and misplaced notions of identity and agency that surfaced in the research.

To further understand teachers' and students' Lifeworlds and problematize the issue of "grit" and its controversial uses in PBIS programs, in this chapter, I build on the background and context presented in Chapter One. First, I explain the PBIS program, including its challenges, as it affects students in more depth. I then examine both the arguments "for" and "against" grit as a construct influencing how we support children and their behaviors in schools. After a thorough examination of the conceptualizations of "grit" as they affect educators and students, the last thing addressed in this chapter will be the theoretical framework used, Lifeworld Theory. The Lifeworlds Theory is often used in phenomenological studies to address the parts of peoples' lives that bring meaning to our own individual experiences. It will provide a useful lens for

examining the data from teachers about how PBIS and its inherent notions of "grit" serve to influence theirs and their students' Lifeworlds.

Statement of the Research Question

The Lifeworlds of teachers are important for educational research (Vagle, 2018). When looking into the efficacy of PBIS and other behavioral or social-emotional learning programs, there are many layers that make an effective implementation into the school. Part of this implementation process involves looking at what structural supports are available within a school while others are concerned with teacher buy-in and appropriate use of the program and programmatic language across the school. This research will answer the question: How do teachers experience using PBIS in their classroom with grit and The Growth Mindset attitudes? This research will use phenomenological methods, interviewing teachers about their experiences of using PBIS, and asking teachers how they have experienced grit and Growth Mindset models to aid in student behavior. The literature reviewed for this research has largely focused on grit and the Growth Mindset through the lens of Childhood Stress and Trauma. These specific lenses have been selected because of my own experience of working with and disciplining students in the classroom who show social and emotional deficits from their personal Lifeworld and experiences.

<div align="center">

Lifeworlds Theory

</div>

"It is first when we become ill and our lived body is changed in a way that we become most aware of well-being as something desirable." (Horberg et al., p. 2)

The theoretical lens for this research is Lifeworlds Theory. Much of the research around the Lifeworld Theory and researching lived experiences revolves around the field of medicine, specifically nursing. The idea of the Lifeworld includes all the things around us that make up

who we are. Taking on influences from nursing research and caring sciences, this theory will be applied to education along with social and educational phenomenology (Horberg et al., 2011; Bengtsson, 2013). When applying this idea of misbehavior outside of the realm of nursing science and applying it to education, one might look at behavior management through punishment and reward. When a student misbehaves and is punished, it becomes evident that there is an expectation that might not fit into the lifeworld of the student. Lifeworld Theory is a necessary tool for helping me analyze my data on teachers' classroom lives and their interpretations of their students in rural Appalachia related to the PBIS reform. Lifeworlds Theory has been used in other fields of study where the human experience is important for understanding, such as child development (Mulderji, 1996), nursing science (Dalhberg & Drew, 1997), and other health and "caring" fields such as rehabilitation or psychology (Ashworth & Ashworth, 2003). Lifeworlds have also been used in phenomenological studies in the field of education (Arnot & Yelland, 2020; Bengsston, 2013) as an empirical research method as it will be used in this study. In this study, Lifeworlds will be used because of the context of the study being in rural Appalachia with the case study being focused around the social, cultural, and economic factors that schools face in this space. Lifeworld Theory is commonly used in phenomenological research from the writings of Merleau-Ponty and Van Manen, both using Lifeworlds to bring meaning to consciousness (Davidson, 2000; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Van Manen, 1995). Lifeworlds stem from the field of phenomenology where the goal of research is to look at the structures of how a specific person or group of people have experienced something. These lived experiences and how they were felt and described by the people themselves are reflected through reflexivity and communication to bring meaning (Rich et al., 2013). From Husserlian Phenomenology, this stems from the "natural attitude", or the everyday experiences

of humans and the thought that others experience life in the same way that we do (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nystrom, 2008; Husserl, 1970). The intersection of realism and idealism is where phenomenology can answer questions (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2020).

Figure 3

Intersection of Realism and Idealism
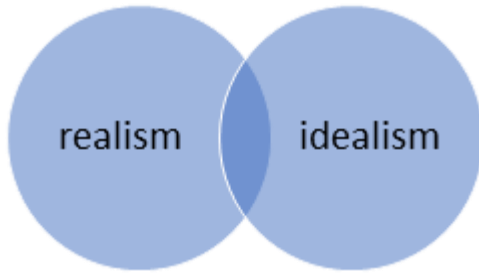
The Hermeneutic Phenomenological Lifeworld uses descriptive methods (Dahlberg, 2008) to meaningfully interpret the phenomena, in this case, how teachers in rural Appalachia experience "gritty" social emotional learning through behavior programs such as PBIS. There are four essential elements to the Lifeworld, as noted by Van Manen (1997); lived body, lived time, lived space, and lived human relations (Rich et al., 2013; Van Manen, 1997; 2015) (Table 4 below).

Table 4

Van Manen's Elements of the Lifeworld

Lived Body	Everyone is "bodily in the world" (p. 104), even through different space and time, we all have a body and there is language and meaning to our bodies
Lived Space	Felt Space; how we feel in a given space, such as feeling "lost" in a new city or feeling overwhelmed in a crowded room

Lived Time	This refers to how time feels as opposed to the objective measure of time in minutes, hours, or days.
Timed Human Relations	The relationships we have with others in the shared spaces, this is where lived body and lived time intersect and

This research will be focusing specifically on lived space and lived human relations. With the use of Lifeworlds Theory, this study is meant not to focus on being "for" or "against" using a grit mindset, but to understand the experiences of teachers and how they experience their students' Lifeworlds, including chronic stress and trauma, in the classroom. The context of the study is situated within a specific space (Appalachia) and the human relations (teacher to researcher, teacher to teacher, teacher to students, teacher to support staff) are what will be opened up through analysis.

Lived Experiences

"Lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research."

(Max Van Manen, 1990)

To work in the Lifeworld and understand the Lifeworld of teachers is to unfold or to bring into consciousness their lived experiences and how they happened in the moment. "The lifeworld, the world of lived experience, is both the source and the object of phenomenological research" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 53). Having conversations about the experience can capture the essence of the moment and give meaning to the phenomena. It is easy to pre-determine meaning to phenomena from our own experiences, but in fact, the phenomena can have a far different meaning than once thought (Van Manen, 1990). The framework for this study is rooted in opening the lived experiences of teachers modeled around the lifeworld research presented by Dahlberg,

Dahlberg, and Nystrom (2008). This framework will be used with the rural K-8 teachers and their experiences of using the PBIS program. Lived experiences work together with Lifeworlds to experience space, bodies and relationships in how experiences are lived. According to Van Manen, the goal of interpretive phenomenological research is to achieve a "direct and primitive contact with the world" (Van Manen, 2016b, p. 38). Van Manen (1990) also discusses the importance of arriving at the phenomena through multiple conversations and interactions, even through daydreaming and reflecting in order to not apply a meaning to the phenomena before the meaning is brought into consciousness. Just as mentioned in nursing science and phenomenology, the experience of the patient in a medical study is crucial to understanding various illnesses. Similarly when working in education, teacher "thinking or critical reflection" is important to understanding classrooms.

PBIS in Depth

Origins and Framework of PBIS

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) stems from practices in behavioral analysis (Horner & Sugai 2015). Typically, PBIS is implemented across entire schools and districts to reinforce positive behaviors by providing incentives for meeting these site-based expectations (Bradshaw et. al. 2008). It is important to realize that even though PBIS is a program implemented throughout the school, it is non-curricular and multi-tiered, starting with Tier 1 interventions being allied to the entire school population [*see Table 1*] (Horner & Sugai 2015). PBIS originated at first as a behavioral program for students identified with special needs in 1998 after the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997 (Bradshaw et al., 2008b; PBISCA, 2016). The research originated through the University of Oregon and has been funded in cycles of five years since 1998, the latest being reauthorized in 2018 (Center on

PBIS, 2022). Using applied behavioral analysis, PBIS is focused on "operational definitions of behavior and intervention elements" and "the logical model to select environmental manipulations designed to alter students and staff behavior" (Horner & Sugai, 2015, p. 80). These goals are set by using a three-tier approach (Table 5). To best implement these practices, a PBIS team is created using school faculty members as leadership models for the school-wide use of the program. These teams should ideally consist of six to eight staff members that include not only teachers but administration, counselors, and school psychologists (Bradshaw et al., 2015). This group would meet monthly to discuss the management of the program while also attending trainings and disseminating information to other staff members (Bradshaw et al., 2015). The implementation process of using school wide PBIS is detailed and specific and yields the best outcomes when followed closely to this model, specifically with the use of the school counselor and psychologists (Cressey et al., 2009).

Table 5

PBIS Tiers (Barrett et al., 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2015; Sugai & Horner, 2006)

Tier 1 Interventions All students within the school will receive Tier 1 services	Primary Prevention: In schools, this Tier I level focuses on establishing a school-wide positive social culture that includes: (a) defining and teaching a small set of behavioral expectations (e.g., be respectful, be responsible, and be safe), (b) establishing a ubiquitous system for reinforcing performance of these expectations, (c) implementing a consistent system for interrupting, correcting, and redirecting behavioral errors, and (d) building an efficient system to collect, summarize, and use data for decision-making. (Horner & Sugai, 2015)
Tier 2 Interventions Includes the 10-15% of all students who will benefit from more "overt and	Secondary Prevention Secondary or targeted interventions address the educational needs of students who are at risk of academic and/or social behavior failure (Barrett et al., 2008).

frequent prompts."	
Tier 3 Interventions 5% or fewer of the student population who do not respond to Tiers 1 and 2	Tertiary Prevention "Tier Three Intervention is characterized by individualized assessment, individualized support plan design, comprehensive support plan implementation, and the management of support by a team uniquely organized to meet the preferences and needs of individual student." (Horner & Sugai, 2015) This level of prevention works better when implemented within a school that also offers Tier 1 and Tier 2 support.

Incentives

Through PBIS Tier 1 universal interventions, schools establish their own sets of norms and expectations through which students can earn "points" through a token system (Bradshaw et al., 2008). Earning PBIS points is a common practice of the program that is often heavily enforced in the school, taking away from the behavior analysis of the program, and focusing more on incentivizing behavior (Tyre & Feurerborn, 2021). Students earn rewards by following the school's established rules, which are usually limited to 3-5 broad behavioral expectations that are then modeled, implemented, and reinforced through the students earning rewards (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2015). Once the students earn points, they can save them for school-specific rewards. Throughout the literature, the language of what these rewards are varies or is vague, my own experiences of school-based rewards include teacher-specific items such as lunch in the classroom or a homework pass, a school-specific store with small toys and games, and time enforced rewards such as an end of term field day or experience. By earning points in a monetary-like system, students are practicing saving and spending skills based on their wants. This does, however, reinforce the idea of capitalism as a societal framework and that being "good" will inherently lead to financial gain and that those who are "bad" or who cannot follow norms established by a position of power are poor, lesser than their peers, and need to fall in line to be successful.

Large Scale PBIS Implementation

Maryland Initiative

Beginning in 1998, the Maryland State Department of Education (MDSE), the Sheppard

Pratt Health Systems (SPHS) and Johns Hopkins University (JHU) began a collaborative

discussion on how to best support mental health and behavioral issues in Maryland State public

schools (Bradshaw et al., 2012). During this academic year, 14 schools began their training in the

PBIS Initiative through statewide leadership partnerships (Barrett et. al., 2008). Starting in 1998,

this initiative has addressed concerns surrounding youth mental health with a rise in anti-social

behavior and aggression (Barrett et. al. 2008). With a rise in these youth traits, there was also an

elevated need for special education services (Barrett et al., 2008). Thus, the implementation was

adjusted and used in the Tier 1 universal classroom setting to address behaviors of all students,

specifically children and youth in the elementary and middle grades (Barrett et al., 2008;

Bradshaw et al., 2012). Maryland's was extremely fortunate to have so many stakeholders

involved in the rollout of PBIS and its training processes. PBIS has become so widely

implemented in the state that it is a part of the Maryland state code (Section 7-304.1) to use PBIS

or another similar behavior program at elementary and middle schools experiencing high rates of

truancy and suspension (Barrett et al., 2008; Justia Law, 2020). The initiative is unique in its

success because of the unique collaboration of the state department and nonprofits. With these

partnerships and the ability to train large groups of staff and make time for more monthly

meetings regarding school wide growth and areas for improvement, the Maryland Initiative

shows success with the PBIS programs that is rare in other states and districts (Bradshaw et al.,

2012).

Limitations of PBIS

Though the literature for PBIS shows positive results when implemented correctly, it is an intricate system that takes years to fully develop (Kittleman et al., 2019). For a school or school district to effectively sustain using PBIS over time, it will take attention not only to the basic features of PBIS itself, but the "buy-in" of teachers and staff, availability of staff, funding, and proper data systems (Horner & Sugai, 2015). Even with the success of the Maryland PBIS initiative, and considering the available support to train the teachers and support the schools financially, many schools in Maryland are still implementing PBIS at only the universal level 1 Tier for all students (Barrett et al., 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2012). In Maryland, the funding and time for Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions are reserved specifically for the elementary and middle schools with extraordinarily high rates of suspensions and defiant behaviors (Barrett et al., 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2012). One reason that many schools, even the ones with the resources to successfully implement Tier 1, struggle to execute PBIS to its fullest potential, is the lack of access to sufficient mental health resources like the use of a school counselor, social worker, or psychologist that is not either split between schools or wearing multiple hats within their school positions (Bradshaw et al., 2012; Cavanaugh & Swan, 2015; Cressey et al., 2003; Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Tyre & Feurerborn, 2021).

With these problems, Tyre & Feurerborn (2021) present the 10 most common "misses" in PBIS implementation. A "miss" according to Tyre and Feurerborn, can be a misconception, a misalignment, or a misapplication. Table 6 (below) describes what each of these types of misses means in relation to the implementation process.

Table 6

Challenges of PBIS Implementation

Misconception	• Only understanding one or a few parts of the program, such as giving "points" • Focusing on the "observable" traits • General lack of knowledge about the program and its purposes, even after years of implementation
Misalignment	• Practices are implemented "incorrectly, incompletely or with low fidelity" (p. 43)
Misapplication	• Misapplications can occur when a teacher or staff member personally disagrees with something within the principle of PBIS against their own values

(Tyre & Feurerborn, 2021)

Tyre and Feurerborn (2021) have also summarized what is lacking specifically that causes the PBIS challenges to occur (Table 7 below).

Table 7

Why PBIS Challenges Occur

Teacher "Buy-In"	• Time to learn and implement a new program • Lack of confidence in other teachers and faculty members doing their part • More discipline and tough policies would be more helpful
Inequitable Structures	• Students who need more reinforcement may receive more positive feedback (including tangible incentives) than others; teachers and staff along with students feeling this is unfair • Students with traumatic home situations
Standardized Expectations	• Less focus on punishment/consequences • Worries with reinforcing "what they should be doing" • Students should already "know" how to behave at school • Students should just follow the teachers' rules with conformity

(Tyre & Feurerborn, 2021)

In addition to these common misses identified by Tyre and Feurerborn in using PBIS, there are other concerns in proper implementation when it comes to time spent in the program, trainings across the school community, and the access to resources necessary to properly execute the program (Berzin et al., 2105; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Horner & Sugai, 2015). Since much of

the PBIS model originates from the US Department of Special Education Services, much of the original funding came from this office and from within state and local spending (Bradshaw et. al. 2008; Bradshaw et. al. 2012). Comparing rural Appalachian schools to the Maryland PBIS initiative, there are inequities in access to resources and funding. With the use of JHU and SPHS along with MSDE funding, there are structures that are not available in other schools in the United States.

Purpose of the Research

Teachers spend a great deal of time with their students and can often be the first to detect when a student is showing signs distress. However, teachers lack the proper training and education to know how to intervene with these students for the best outcomes. In the classroom setting, there are expectations set by the teacher, the school, or a combination of both of what academic and behavioral traits are to be achieved and understood by all students. These behavioral goals are often established by the school itself, often missing the lived experiences of all students within the classroom, classifying that all students should be able to perform the same way if they are trying hard enough (Dweck, 2007; Duckworth, 2007; Sanguras, 2018; PBIS, 2021). Oftentimes, teachers will refer a student to the guidance counselor or school social worker, but in many communities, these resources are not always readily available. However, in "grit" oriented approaches, students may slip through the cracks when teachers are instructed to frame students' challenges almost universally as misbehaviors and grit is constructed in narrow psychological ways that are not contextualized in the Lifeworlds of the students themselves. Holding students to a high standard is important for growth and development. Yet, it is important to recognize that there are also instances in which a student's access to a higher potential could be inhibited by other factors in their life and that education needs to be responsive and flexible to

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avoid blame-the-victim deficit ideologies (Crawford-Garrett, 2018; Goodman, 2018; Sherfinski et al., 2019) in which structural barriers may be re-framed as laziness (Bishop, 2014; Gorski, 2016).

Official models of American schooling are often far-removed from the Lifeworlds of all of their teachers and children. The American school is recognized as a place of not only academic knowledge and growth, but also social and behavioral competence that is built from standards-based knowledge and school-based expectations, which has historically been rooted in Whiteness, Christianty, and financial meritocracy (Phelps & Sperry, 2020; Urban & Wagoner 2008). In schools, success is often measured by academic achievement as collected through benchmark and standardized assessment (Phelps & Sperry, 2020; Urban & Wagoner, 2008). Though the assessment itself is rooted in standards that are placed within the school curriculum for teachers to deliver, there is not a set of standards that are used for student mental well-being (Phelps & Sperry, 2020; Sanguras, 2018). Even if there were such a set of social and emotional standards, emotional well-being and behavioral expectations are not universal qualities—all-encompassing of the backgrounds, cultures, and stories that our students are bringing with them to school (Bishop, 2010; Socol, 2014). The official narrative of American schooling shifts and changes when we look specifically at the rural and Appalachian context. For example, in rural and Appalachian communities, schools are underfunded compared to their suburban and urban counterparts in the Northeast, West, and Midwest (Schafft, 2016). There is access to mental health care facilities (Ziller et al., 2010), and a greater stigma around the ideas and implementation of grit and resilience for growth (Catte, 2018).

The purpose of this research is to explore the Lifeworlds of teachers implementing PBIS in their classrooms. This research is important to the field because of the focus on the experience

of the teachers who are implementing these programs, as the experiential side of these studies are usually not included (Berzin et al., 2015). This research will use case study with phenomenological analysis of how through these programs, K-12 teachers experience how "misbehaviors" of their students are identified with a grit and resilience framework. I place "misbehaviors" in quotes because I want to argue that the lens and context of the research conspire to construct youth as behaviorally non-normative through the official curriculum of American schooling that teachers are required to deliver to their students through these programs. Next, I explain more about why the notion of "grit" is so valuable in the official marketplace of schooling. I review an example of how PBIS uses a resilience model to encourage students to reinforce their positive behaviors and continue earning "points" for their ability to follow school rules and achieve success as prescribed by the school.

Conforming to Grit: How Behavior Intervention leads to Calm Bodies and Minds

"Grit is about internal fortitude and zeal" (Sanguras, 2018, p. 4)

"Grit" is used in the practical educational literature informing consuming teachers in their everyday lives, either primarily through professional books and articles, or secondarily through the programs that it informs. As in the definition above, "grit" is almost universally used in professional literature as a psychological and sometimes cultural construct, rather than a sociologically informed idea. For example, when speaking of grit in the context of personal success, the popular psychologist Duckworth (2007) defines grit as "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (p. 1087). When speaking of grit in the realm of education, the long-term goals being set forth by educational stakeholders are standards-based and are not individualized for all students, specifically when speaking of school-wide behavioral and emotional expectations. In more common parlance, grit can be defined as "mental toughness and courage"

(Webster, 2021). Both definitions indicate an inter-individual aptitude that can be translated in different ways across different settings. An important difference is that long-term goals may or may not be set by individuals, indicating potentially the top-down constraints that may shape how one responds to goal structures. The top-down nature of "grit" becomes more important to consider carefully when one learns that students have experienced one or more traumatic and often chronically stressful events.

Although it may sound at first like a strange link, the eugenics movement of the early 20th Century has deeply influenced how some psychologists, specifically Angela Duckworth and the *Grit* movement, are talking about "grit" in present day educational literature. Briefly, eugenics links back to the original work of Sir Francis Galton, a eugenicist and pioneer in researching human intelligence (Ball, n.d). Galton, author of *Hereditary Genius,* studied the effects of race on intellect and success throughout life. He was a proponent of organizing marriage so that the "superior" or successful and morally righteous humans would marry, have children, and repopulate the earth, with superior beings—their line of offspring (Marson, 2009). In his book *Hereditary Genius*, Galton showed that success seemed to run in families, and the more closely related a person was to a high achiever, the more likely they were to become one themselves (Galton, 1869; Mackenzie, 1976). He argued that this proved that intelligence, accomplishment, and various other traits were inherited (Ball, n.d.). This racist argument ignores factors such as wealth, social status, and family networks such as place and language in the access humans have to success. In Galton's work, the White people were the superior race and by continuing to marry and breed White wealthy people, the gap in achievement across racial groups would continue to grow. The eugenics view has shifted the conversation such that when a person, or in this sense, a child, follows the path that has been designated to them by someone who is in a position of

power, in this sense teachers and education stakeholders, there will inherently be success because they tried hard and did what they were supposed to do. The systems in place, in this argument, work. Although it is not normally discussed in relation to the current popular psychology texts that broadly influence teachers' and students' Lifeworlds, the inter-individual, biological notion of "grit" promoted by eugenics erases the experiences that have been formed amongst all students, the sociological lens on education. When grit ideology is perpetuated through the business orientations of school systems, educators must also navigate and accept that for every systemic success that has been created, some individuals from various marginalized groups will never be able to achieve equal outcomes (Bishop, 2010; Kundu, 2014).

Creating "Gritty" Children

Why do we force children to be complacent yet become "gritty" inside their bodies at the same time? It is a paradox, and it seems like a difficult equilibrium for a person to maintain! Indeed, it appears the purpose of "inner fortitude" may ultimately be to trick children into sitting still, complacent in both their physical movements and emotional interiors. To start, PBIS and similar models rely on a system of producing docile, or calm bodies (Foucault, 1972). These expectations are set forth by educational leaders within the school building or school district and ae enforced by classroom teachers and other staff members within the building. As previously mentioned, following the rules, or even so much as not being caught in the act of breaking a rule result in "points" that lead to a monetary type of system where students are cashing in points for treats. In a system such as this, the panoptical control (Foucault, 1972) lies within the teacher to catch the students performing both "good" and "bad" in accordance with the set expectations (Bradshaw et al., 2015, Foucault, 1972). In addition to the behavioral expectations and the performance of following school behavioral norms, there are also notions of the school being a

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place that allows American teachers to "bank" information into children's minds so they might fare well on standardized tests and other academic benchmarks (Freire, 1970). There are many pressures to do so in the global neoliberal economy, including national pressures for the US to bode well on annual performance and growth exams, middle-class community and family pressures for college entrance, and middle-class pressures for children to please their parents and teachers (Kundu, 2014). These pressures are designed to produce effective and efficient learning of skills and concepts needed for standardized tests at an affordable price tag in the overall state and/or district budget equation (Bishop, 2010; Kundu, 2014). These pressures are "lived" in families, communities, and classrooms in complex ways (Crawford-Garrett, 2018).

Through PBIS and its social-emotional counterpart programs such as The Growth Mindset (Dweck, 2007), Second Step (Committee for Children), The Seven Habits Model (Covey, 2008), and TEAMology (TEAMology, 2016), expectations are built around the ideas of grit and resilience. Students are rewarded through a token system to reinforce their gritty positive behaviors as selected and formally written out by the PBIS team or administration within the school (PBIS, 2021; WVPBIS, 2016). These behaviors that are labeled "positive" do not always account for personal traumatic and stressful experiences that students have or are currently experiencing or have lived through in their past (Goodman, 2018). The PBIS behavioral expectations are usually broken down into three broad categories. Why is it, that when concerning ourselves with students' behavioral actions and emotional coping strategies are schools not more place-specific in the implementation of the rules for students? Because we all live in different places and have different communities and meanings in our worlds, why are the expectations not matching the place? In forthcoming sections, I look at arguments "for" and "against" the use of grit as a useful construct in teaching and learning.

Arguments "For" Grit

> *"The great teachers believe in the growth of the intellect and talent, and they are fascinated with the process of learning." (Dweck, 2007, p. 197)*

Much of the existing literature related to grit and resilience in school-aged youth exists around the idea that with hard work, dedication, and perseverance, anything can be accomplished (Dweck, 2007; Duckworth, 2007; Sanguras, 2018). The pioneer of the Growth Mindset, Carol Dweck, first published her book called, *Mindset, the New Psychology of Success* in 2007, declaring that humans can learn to reach their full potential in parenting, business, school and relationships through the growth mindset, or to not allow the hardships and obstacles of life to blind you from seeing and reaching your fullest potential (Dweck, 2007). Though this book frames the idea of the Growth Mindset around multiple different facets of life, this review will be focusing on the section of the book regarding the Growth Mindset and the relationship between students and teachers as well as a focus on intellect, ability, and achievement. Throughout the Growth Mindset literature, Dweck and others discuss that with perseverance and interest in the subject matter at hand, whether it be academic or through a hobby such as gymnastics (Dweck, 2007; Sanguras, 2018). With these two traits, a person can accomplish anything because their mindset will allow them.

Models of Growth Mindset and Resiliency in Schools

Chapter one of this paper described various programs such as Trauma Informed Elementary Schools (TIES), Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS), and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Horner & Sugai, 2015; Jaycox, 2007; Rishel et al., 2019). These programs focus on intervening directly to the behavior that is seen as unfit for the school day and are often accompanied by a partner social-emotional learning

program. In the section below, I will describe in detail three social-emotional wellbeing programs that are used today, often in conjunction with a behavioral program.

Second Step

Second Step lauds itself as a "Holistic Social-Emotional Learning Program" that connects the social-emotional classroom learning to the family and the community that the students live in (Council for Children, 2021). Second Step, a social-emotional learning program from the Collaborative for Academic and Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL), has roots in the studies of Bronfenbrenner and the 6 levels that occur within human development, starting with the child at the center (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Council for Children, 2021.)

Second Step shows the highest success rates when the social-emotional programming and language is spread across multiple places and times such as all classrooms, the lunchroom, and the playground (Cantor, 2019; Council for Children, 2021). Second Step also provides family-based programming to continue the same practices at home as are used within the school day (Council for Children, 2021). In an ideal situation, Second Step supports such as positive and uniform language would be used across time and space in a students' life in their home and community would be ideal, this cannot be enforced in the same capacity that it is in a school day. Within the school environment, Second Step often can be showcased through posters and programming, but there is no guarantee that these supports will continue for all students in the same capacity when the school day ends. Specifically, when students are experiencing a traumatic situation at home, or perhaps have experienced trauma that has left them in an out of home placement, the structure of the school day may not be continued throughout the out of school settings.

7 Habits of Happy Kids/Happy Teens

Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,* first published the book as a business and self-help book. Stephen Covey was a professor at Brigham Young University. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* was just the beginning of the 7 Habits enterprise containing many products and programs that have influenced the business world, individuals set on success, and more recently, public schools. The first book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,* is now marketed as a team building and leadership development course for both individuals and groups at a business level. The website that markets these programs, Franklin Covey, states that this program is the "proven individual effectiveness operation system," but does not mention how it is proven successful, nor through what methods this was decided. The website also supplies several avenues to read more about the program and opportunities to purchase courses and attended events to become more versed on the subject of leadership. The original program has been adapted many times for kids and teens. Table 8 shows each habit and how it is explained in a school-based program. While Second Step is grounded in child development theory, *7 Habits* is rooted in Christianity and moral education (English, 2002). Outside of the religious roots, the *7 Habits* model also argues that students should change to assimilate into their environment rather than the environment working as a whole system to accept the differences we all share (Carlone, 2001).

Table 8

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens

HABIT	DEFINITION
1. Be proactive	Take responsibility for your life

2. Begin with the end in mind	Define your mission and goals in life	
3. Put first things first	Prioritize and do the most important things first	
4. Think win-win	Have an everyone can win attitude	
5. Seek first to understand, then be understood	Listen to people sincerely	
6. Synergize	Work together to achieve more	
7. Sharpen the saw	Renew yourself regularly	

(S. Covey, 1998)

TEAMology

TEAMology is a social-emotional learning program for children in grades K-8. This program was produced as a Start Up company from Penn State University founded in 2016 (PSU, 2022). TEAMology uses a house as the framework for this program, where six different pillars of social-emotional success are used a different part of the house. Once all the pillars are used, the house is built, and students can be in the house together- sparking the tagline "Are you in the House?" (TEAMology, 2022). Though the elementary school level is more focused on the construction of the house than the middle school level, the characters still play an important role in bringing their pillar to the classroom through the execution of career exploration (TEAMology 2022). Because this program is a startup through PSU, the data on the efficacy of the program is limited.

A Disclaimer: Incorporating Diverse Identities and Culture within Teaching

Throughout the last calendar year, more and more states seem to be placing limitations on what teachers are or are not allowed to teach in schools regarding race and what politicians are

referring to as "divisive topics" (Pendharkar, 2021). Though this is not new to the educational world, the media attention it has gained has grown exponentially in recent times. Because of widespread concern over Critical Race Theory, or what some are calling Critical Race Theory (CRT) in classrooms, a plethora of definitions have been brought into popular news media causing political division amongst policymakers. These discussions and disagreements have caused additional stress on teachers, including in the states of West Virginia and Virginia within the Appalachian region. In West Virginia, legislative bills have reached the senate judiciary committee and the floor of the house of delegates (ex., WVHB 2595) stating that teachers were not allowed to talk about "divisive" concepts in school, including the sexual identity of students (WV Legislature, 2022). In Texas, during the 2021 school year, it was decided by the Board of Education that the Holocaust could not be taught without "considering both sides of the argument" (NPR, 2021). In Indiana, a law has passed through the House of Delegates (House Bill 1334) that teachers must have their lesson plans posted to a public form by June 30th, 2022, preceding the upcoming school year in order for parents to review and have time to file a complaint about the curriculum their students would be receiving (EdWeek, 2022). In Virginia, a hotline was established for parents to call if they had a complaint to file about something that was being taught in the classroom (NBC Washington, 2022; WTOP, 2022).). With laws like these being established in the classroom, it will become increasingly difficult to provide the social-emotional lessons that students need, especially those who are dealing with trauma in relation to their race, ethnicity, sexuality, or anything else that has been deemed "divisive" by educational stakeholders. If students are unable to talk about their identity at home or do not have a safe place to express themselves, their teachers should be a trusted outlet for security. If these bills were to be passed into law, schools will be unable to discuss these social and

emotional topics. Looking into the Lifeworlds of students, it is impossible to separate their experiences at home and their experiences in the classroom because of how they will continuously influence each other. We as educators must continue to work on ways for students to manage their Lifeworlds, including the stress and trauma they carry, to create the most successful environment possible.

Arguments "Against" Grit

The arguments against using "grit" as a conceptual focus in education may outweigh those for it, as I explain in this section. What Dweck (2007) fails to mention are the structural barriers that exist in society, in this case, within Appalachia, that cause a lack of access for all, regardless of the mindset a person has. Dweck also states that people with a fixed mindset, the terminology used to contradict the growth mindset, often place the blame on others instead of taking responsibility to try again on their own (Dweck, 2007). A fixed mindset is based in a belief system that our abilities are innate and there is a cap on what we will be able to accomplish in life. Someone with a fixed mindset would see an end to their ability and a lack of confidence to try to improve. In her book, Dweck uses examples of students failing a test because the teacher is "stupid" or because the professor did not like the student, and uses these claims as examples in the fixed mindset. This illustrates the fixed mindset because instead of working "harder" as a growth minded person would do, one would find something to blame. A growth-minded person, according to Dweck, would recognize what they could work harder on and try again next time through perseverance and studying instead of blaming others. What Dweck doesn't mention in these anecdotes are the plethora of other reasons that someone may fail academically that does not relate to either educators in the student's Lifeworld not trying hard enough or the student placing the blame on others (Goodman, 2018; Gorski, 2016). Great

teachers may very well draw upon concepts of the growth mindset to encourage their students'

growth. Great teachers, however, also recognize the structural barriers that are in place within

their own communities. Such barriers lead to inequities in access to education, mental and

physical health care, safe housing, a support system at home through a positive family dynamic,

and many other situations that are stated within the previously mentioned ACE study (Crawford-

Garrett, 2018; Felitti et al., 1998). School based incentives and social-emotional learning

programs such as PBIS are often focused on norms established by the school faculty and staff,

who often come from middle-class backgrounds, which can distort the expectations for students

who are not situated in the same place (Kundu, 2014). Therefore, they may tend to misrecognize

children's Lifeworlds as they interpret programs written often by White and middle-class

curriculum designers also far-removed from children's Lifeworlds (Crawford-Garrett, 2018).

Thus, the social-emotional programs and teachers' expectations may be mostly built around

academic success and normalizing the characteristics of the White middle class, especially if

they are not critically interpreted and taught (Bishop, 2010; Crawford- Garrett, 2018; Kundu,

2014).

In his book, *It's Not About Grit,* Goodman (2018) uses case studies, interviews, video

documentation, and student involvement to support first-hand some of the concerns with the

current model of resilience and grit in schools. By working with students first-hand through their

experiences of trauma such as inadequate housing and deportation of a parent, Goodman talks

about grit being shown in different ways rather than just showing "passion and perseverance" to

meet the standards of the school (Duckworth, 2007; Goodman, 2018). Oftentimes in school, the

methods used to set classroom and school expectations are done from middle-class norms

established by school and district administrations. These expectations are usually character-based

and as Goodman writes, not all students have the same experiences and support in their non-school life, making access to their school life much more difficult. When the school rules are conflated with character education, the system is continuing to put moral standards and achievement above the basic well-being of the students (Socol, 2014). Students must make choices every day, and oftentimes the choice that may seem gritty in a traditional sense of the word mentioned previously do not meet the "grit" expectation set forth by the school.

"Choices" students make that lead to negative performance in school are not as simple as not taking skittles from the candy bowl, a common illustration of "grit" in some of the psychological literature, but are more about survival (Sanguras, 2018). Goodman explains that students with traumatic experiences such as a death in the family, inadequate housing, deportation of a guardian, or countless other events, are not necessarily lacking "grit". Instead, they are not applying their grit in the context mentioned by Duckworth, Sanguras and others who Goodman views as using the concept of grit as a "crutch" to continue the narrative of a moral hierarchy (Boomer & Dorwin, 2008). Instead, there may be resilience in the context of inequitable structures, and thus students who are showing resilience may not be showing the same outcomes because they are starting at different levels (Socol, 2014).

Living in the era of accountability that requires hard work toward being successful, accountability within schools should recognize the barriers that have been put in place that block certain groups of students from succeeding (poverty, race, access to health care, housing) and find more equitable and culturally sustainable ways to transform education in spite of them (Paris & Alim, 2017). These possibilities might be further thwarted, however, by programs that champion a "culture of poverty" approach (Payne, 2005). The poverty culture narrative has been spread in schools through the rhetoric of *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Payne,

1995), with five editions of the book in press since 1995, and the most recent being published in 2013. Though Payne rose to popularity in the early 2000's, specifically in this region of the US, the ideas of blaming poverty on moral and racial issues was not a new thought in the framework of society and, furthermore, of schools. In *Blaming the Victim,* Ryan (1976) writes of the issues in society of blaming minority populations for their own shortcomings in school and in society where "success" was measured on a scale of Whiteness and patriarchal leadership roles.

Because Payne's work was so widely adopted in schools, specifically schools with high populations of students in poverty, there are additional barriers created for the students when their teachers have a mindset that minimizes the worth of the student (Boomer & Dorwin, 2008). If teachers continue to be taught through professional development the ideas that poverty is usually self-inflicted and looks a certain way, then teachers are not receiving education on how to assist students in poverty through a trauma-informed lens. Poverty is not always visible, and to equate poverty to rummaging through the best trash cans for food (Boomer & Dorwin, 2008; Payne, 2005) is to continue the narrative of poverty culture and moral degradation.

We as educators must also look at the counter argument along the lines of eugenics and succession of familial achievement in understanding systemic issues in the societies and communities we teach in and the path that students could fall towards without proper understanding of how grit is framed in the classroom and how "grittiness" is displayed in different ways.

Apple (2006) discusses the religious morality and ties to the global marketplace in more detail in *Educating the Right Way: Markets, god, and Inequality.* As previously mentioned, the notion of poverty being viewed as a moral deficit with racial ties to both morality and socioeconomic status, "grit" is deeply molded into American schools. Apple discusses Pat

Robertson, an evangelist and former politician, who interpreted the Eighth Commandment "Thou Shall not Steal" to mean that our wealth belongs to the individual who "earned" the wealth and should not be shared with the poor. An extension of moral well-being, moral economics (Apple, 2006) and financial capital go hand in hand that the morally rich will also financially prosper. By God, hard work, or grit, will be rewarded to those who earn it, and those who don't will suffer.

"Grit" has been positioned in unique and challenging ways in the rural and Appalachian setting of this study that seem to perpetuate the eugenics argument here. Galton states in his eugenics research that with successful parents will come successful children, creating a line of systemic success and leaving out those less fortunate. Though the eugenics argument was largely based upon race when Galton wrote in the 1800s, this argument can also be applied across classist systems. With systems in Appalachia such as boom and bust mining cycles leaving entire towns desolate and the narrative of the region being romanticized in poverty culture, the view of the region has been perpetuated and profited from those whose Lifeworlds are often outside of it. For example, the images of Appalachia stemming from the 1930s include images of those left behind in the Shenandoah Forest as land was developed for national parks. The 1960s Johnson administration declared a War on Poverty, and in more recent years the ideology of "Trump Country" has taken a hold on the region. "Appalachia is, often simultaneously, a political construction, a vast geographic region, and a spot that occupies an unparalleled place in our cultural imagination" (Catte, 2018, p. 10). In terms of Appalachia as a socially constructed region, "outsiders" to the region often view the people here as uneducated, poor hillbillies who live a different style and quality of life than the rest of the United States (Sherfinski et al., 2019; Slocum, 2012; Catte, 2018). Appalachian people have been framed in these roles through popular culture in books such as *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance, its film adaptation, and the

documentary film, "The Wild and Wonderful Whites of West Virginia". This idea of the "poor Appalachian" relates to what Gorski's (2016) labels the notion of deficit ideology, where it is the belief of many (Gans, 1996) that people living in poverty are doing so because of ethical, spiritual and intellectual shortcomings (Gorski, 2016, p. 381). Ruby Payne's (2005) work, often the focus of school professional development, only allows this narrative to continue. Payne posits poverty as a choice and a situation that typically happens to those who do not have the same "morals" as those living in the middle and upper class (Boomer & Dorwin, 2008; Payne, 2005). This ties into the eugenics argument of "grit" from the Galton-influenced works of Duckworth (2007) and the moral and religious teachings of Covey (1998) from the 7 Habits programs. Because of the perpetuated stereotypes of rural Appalachia and the lived experiences of the people here, the grit mindset is not an appropriate measure for schools and the mental hygiene of students.

Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the current literature on grit, the Growth Mindset, and positive behavior systems in schools. This chapter also summarizes how this study will use a framework of Lifeworlds Theory to accomplish a phenomenological analysis of the teachers' experiences with using these models in the classroom with students who may be facing trauma or traumatic stress in their Lifeworld.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As mentioned in the introduction, I have been a middle school teacher for eight years in a public middle school in the Appalachian region. Prior to becoming a middle school teacher, I spent one year teaching in a small elementary school as a special education teacher. The county I

was situated in has used many different behavior management and social emotional learning tools that affect students' lives in and out of the classroom. Much of the literature review focused on the grit and resilience mindsets that are infused into the behavior management strategies in schools (Duckworth, 2007; Dweck, 2007; Sanguras 2018). My experiences using grit and resilience inform this study through counter-narratives in which grit and resilience are not equitable practices for the social and emotional growth of students, particularly in those students who have experienced traumatic experiences and chronic stress in their childhoods (Felitti et. al. 1998; Goodman, 2018; Kohn, 2014; Tiech et al., 2008).

Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research methods are typically used in educational research, where the research may be rooted in "improving" one or more aspects of learning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Because my research questions focus on a lived phenomenon that is bounded contextually by the policies and practices of one school community in rural Appalachia requiring discursive and textual data to understand, I chose to use a qualitative case study of one middle school combined with a phenomenological approach to collecting, analyzing, and writing up the data.

Case Study Method

Qualitative case study research allows researchers to study a phenomenon within a specific context (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This study was performed through the case study method. Case studies are commonly used in qualitative research to collect a small sample of data that can theoretically be applied to a larger data set to access multiple settings (Kumar, 2018).

Case study methods were chosen for this research because of its specific geographical ties to classrooms in Appalachia. The phenomenon in question has "bounds" that, for the

purposes of my study, keep the lens of my study on the systems that work within that place (Baxter & Jack, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

There are many types of case studies that serve different purposes in their efforts to explain a phenomenon within a specific context (Baxter & Jack, 2015). These case studies can be used as a single model or multiple case studies. Yin (2003) describes many different types of case studies and how they may be used to collect specific data and the application of the findings. This study uses descriptive case study because of the rich interviews and lived experiences shared throughout the course of the study. Other case study models were considered for this study, such as explanatory and exploratory, but were ultimately eliminated because of the value that descriptive case studies hold in "intervention or phenomena of the real-life context" (Baxter & Jack, 2015, p. 548; see also Yin, 2003). Multiple case study methods were also considered for this research, but I found there to be more value to build relationships and understand deeper experiences of specific locations as opposed to surface level work across multiple locations.

Phenomenology

Nested with the case study as a primary method, interpretive phenomenology was used to study lived experience, in a way similar to how experiences of pain have been studied in the nursing field (Smith & Osborne, 2015). The phenomena being investigated through my study is not only about physical pain, but further explores mental illness, trauma, and emotional pain. Additionally, this approach allows the researcher and participants to open up discussions about experiences of using an intervention model to support students' mental health, which stemmed from these events. Interpretive phenomenology in this study incorporates the researcher "trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them" (Smith &

Osborne, 2015 p. 41). According to Max Van Manen (1990), interpretive phenomenology never really ends, but is a constant circle of investigating, reflecting, and bridling (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nystrom, 2008) the experiences of the participants from the researcher (Van Manen, 1990).

The intent of this study was to open up the phenomenon of teachers' experiences of the grit and resilience model being used in the classroom for student behavior management. This study, therefore, opens the phenomenon of teachers "in" their Appalachian classrooms using PBIS as a behavior management tool. The preposition "in" signifies how phenomena are seen, specifically relating to rural classroom teachers who execute PBIS in their schools, and how the researcher will approach this (Vagle, 2018). Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology have different approaches where Heidegger focuses on the "in" and Husserl concentrates on "of-ness". This "of-ness" centers on the relationship of the subject to object. Conversely, "in-ness" uses language and contextual situations to come into meaning through intentionality rather than having meaning in consciousness (Vagle, 2018; Van Manen, 2016a).

Language is a large factor of the "in-ness" of this approach because the language allows for the hermeneutic spiral to work in a continuous pattern by having an intentional relationship with the object. In this case, the intentional relationship will be between myself as researcher and the subjects of the research, the teachers who are using PBIS as a behavior management tool. This differs from the essential core model where the object is set in place in the consciousness and essences are brought out. "For Heidegger, language is not only the manifestation of a thing: it is the thing itself" (Grondin, 2003, p. 727). Van Manen (2016a) notes that language is rooted in our surroundings in our lifeworld through space, time, relations, body, and experiences. Vagle (2018) writes, "In Heideggerian-oriented phenomenological research, intended meanings are conceived in being and language, which are always, I would argue, found "in" intersubjective, contextual

relations" (p. 42). In this way, phenomena are not directed from subjects out into the world. They come into being and in language as humans relate with things and one another, again, "in" the world" (Vagle, 2018, p. 42). These "intersubjective, contextual" relations shift in time, space, and body, as put forth by Van Manen. By studying the "in-ness" of the phenomena, we can bring meaning through time and space of how the experience was lived and understood.

Reflexivity

"To reflect is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings which are the capital stock of intelligence dealing with further experiences. It is the heart of intellectual organization and of the disciplined mind." (Dewey, 1938)

One strategy to keep preconceived and evolving thoughts in check while conducting qualitative research is to practice reflexivity. In the context of social research, the term *reflexivity* refers to the way products of research are affected by a person's influences and how the research is guided (Davies, 1999). Reflexivity is an important tool for phenomenological researchers because it allows for the context of the phenomena to not only surface, but also considers and records the context of the research in a specific moment. Reflexivity in qualitative research has been characterized as growing beyond the relationship of the researcher to the data (Pillow, 2003). While there are different types of reflexivity in qualitative research, this study will be using positional reflexivity. With respect to a researcher, Macbeth describes positional reflexivity as "taking up the analysts' (uncertain) position and positioning in the world he or she studies and is often expressed with a vigilance for unseen, privileged, or, worse, exploitative relationships between analyst and the world" (Macbeth, 2001, p. 38). Macbeth also writes that in positional reflexivity, the "borders of the hermeneutic circle" are challenged.

Pepin and Patrizio (2015) take a different approach on the purpose of reflexivity in qualitative research and utilize imagery from popular culture. In their work, they refer to Albus

Dumbledore in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* where he uses the Elder Wand to extract memories of a conversation with Mad-Eye Moody and place them into the pensieve. Dumbledore uses the pensieve to reflect on memories later on, however, the memory is locked into that specific place and time (Pepin & Patrizio, 2015; Rowling, 2005). Even though Dumbledore could simply recall these conversations with Alistair "Mad-Eye" Moody, the memory may be altered as experienced due to influences of both time and space. Because the pensieve saves the memory in the exact moment, the residual factors still linger. Although we in the Muggle world do not have access to a pensieve to capture our memories, we can use a reflexivity journal to capture similar qualities.

Phenomenological methods rely heavily on the researcher's ability to reflexively deal with their biases. Because mental health in schools is a fluid situation, the researcher's experience alone cannot define or shape a response for all issues or questions that may arise. Students' mental health, and how educators react to situations, can and will change throughout time depending on a school's environment. This environment can be affected by outside influences such as program implementation, the type of trauma the students' experience, the relationship of the teachers to the students, and the entire school climate. Because of this, a constructionist approach provides a space for phenomena development to be discussed in a more open-minded and understanding way.

My study uses Van Manen's (1990) "lived time and relationship" as a guide to reflexivity. That is because this study specifically focuses on the experiences of teachers using PBIS in Appalachian schools and therefore constructs the meaning of their students' mental wellness through the lens of a program. Because constructionism includes the researcher existing in both the time and space of a phenomena, it is crucial that the researcher recognizes their place and role within a situation. This approach, from a Husserlian standpoint, is recognized as "bracketing" in

which a researcher's point-of-view is "bracketed" or removed from the study (Van Manen, 1990).

Bracketing in phenomenological research is when the researcher suspends all of their beliefs and

preconceived notions about the phenomena, so they do not disrupt an experience.

Bridling

Even though the perspective of Husserlian phenomenology calls for the researcher to

"bracket" their beliefs, interpretive phenomenology allows for more researcher involvement in

their own research. Bridling, as written by Dahlberg, Dahlberg, and Nystrom says that "personal

beliefs, theories, and other assumptions that otherwise would mislead the understanding of

meaning and thus, limit the research openness" (pp. 129-130).

Contrary to Husserlian phenomenology, Heidegger believed a researcher has a place in

their own research, and because of the intricacy of being "in" the research, their point-of-view

can never be completely eliminated (Vagle, 2018). In respect to this, our own experiences must

always be considered, and reviewed when researching and expanding on a given phenomenon

(Vagle, 2018). Hence, this study will not "bracket" information from my personal point-of-view

but rather will "bridle" information (Dahlberg, 2006, p. 16) in-and-out of consciousness.

"Researchers should practice a disciplined kind of interaction and communication with their

phenomena and informants, and 'bridle' the event of understanding so that they do not

understand too quickly, too carelessly or slovenly" (Dahlberg, Dahlberg & Nystrom, 2008, p.

130).

Just like you would bridle the restraints on a horse to reign the animal in and conversely

let it run, bridling in phenomenological research allows for the researcher to internalize their bias

or beliefs while allowing to loosen the philosophical reigns and let their experiences come to

surface. To bridle in this study, I will be using a bridling journal throughout the entire process.

This becomes an important tool to include throughout data collection and analysis to both actively engage and question my own understandings as they surface in my mind. Hence, the interactions between myself and my participants can be shaped into new experiences and meanings.

This not only allows for the lived experiences of a participant to be expressed naturally without interruption or misinterpretation but provides the researcher to freely express their assumptions to support the opening of the phenomena. The initial step of this method will introduce the concept of bridling by beginning with a reflexivity statement. This notion will further continue throughout the study by using a reflexivity journal inspired by Macbeth's (2001) writings on the importance of qualitative, specifically phenomenological, researchers keeping a reflexivity journal to track their own thoughts while collecting and interpreting data. By utilizing this approach, one can observe the full effect a researcher has in their studies.

Since reflexivity captures the feelings of the moment both as it was and when it was experienced (Macbeth, 2001; Pepin & Patrizio, 2011), we can start conversations and interactions with each other to "re-achieve a direct and primitive contact with the world" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 38). Interpreting in phenomenology is not a simple and linear process; it is not concerned with concrete or factual parts, but more with how a given phenomenon was experienced. As stated by Van Manen (1990),

> Things turn very fuzzy just when they seemed to become so clear. To do a phenomenological study of any topic, therefore, it is not enough to simply recall experiences I or others may have had with respect to a particular phenomenon. Instead, I must recall the experience in such a way that the essential aspects, the meaning structures of this experience as lived through are brought back, as it were, and in such a way that we recognize this description as a possible experience, which means as a possible interpretation of that experience. (p. 41)

Vagle's (2018) Whole-Part-Whole analysis of phenomenological data highlights the ability to recall experiences while including reflexivity of the researcher working within a field. Just as Van Manen said, we must recall the experiences as if we are "brought back" which can be accomplished using bridling (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nystrom, 2008) and through reflexive practices (Macbeth, 2001; Pepin & Patrizio, 2011).

During this study, reflexivity will be used during the data collection and writing process to capture the experiences of both the participant and researcher as they surface. Being reflexive in a space allows for Lifeworld experiences to be saved and reused at another point in time. Phenomenological work benefits from this approach because it yields transparency and deeper understanding into how one is interpreting and feeling about a certain subject.

Context of the Study

The context of this study took place in a school in West Virginia that has been identified as a "cohort school" for the 2021-2022 school year. Cohort Schools identified by the West Virginia PBIS (WVPBIS) that they are formally implementing SWPBIS under the guidance of PBIS (WVPBIS, 2016). The school used for this study has been identified through the Cohort schools that fall within the context of Appalachian schools in a rural county as identified by the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (USDA ERS, 2000).

Table 9

WVPBIS Cohort School: Tremont Elementary School (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021-2022 School Year)

School	County	Demographics	Population	Title 1

School	County	Demographics	Population	Title 1
Tremont Elementary	Fairfield	White - 121 2 or More Races- 1 Male - 61 Female - 61	122 students	Yes

Table 10

WVPBIS Cohort School: Fairfield Middle School (National Center for Education Statistics,

2021-2022 School Year)

School	County	Demographics	Population	Title 1
Fairfield Middle	Fairfield	White - 686 Black - 8 Asian -3 Hispanic - 1 Male - 371 Female - 330	701 Students	Yes

Data Collection

Data collection was done primarily through phenomenological interviews. Though

phenomenological interviews are designed similarly to semi-structured interviews, they differ in

the nature of the phenomena unfolding, and the time spent gathering the "experiential material"

(Van Manen, 2016). These interviews were semi-structured in nature in that I as the researcher

needed to tend to the interviews with the phenomena in mind while also bridling my own

understanding and experiences (Dahlberg, 2008; Van Manen, 2016). When Vagle (2016) writes

about phenomenological data collection through interviews, he stresses the importance of

writing, note taking, revisiting, and rewriting multiple times throughout the analysis process. I

did note taking during the interview process but kept this to an absolute minimum to be fully

immersed in the conversation with the participants. I spent time immediately following the interviews to reflexively write in my journal and listen back to the interviews. Following the interviews, I was also sure to download and transcribe data using Zoom transcription software to save a transcribed version of the interview. This ensured that I did not lose any data and that I had a copy of the transcribed interview to begin analyzing in the whole-part-whole process.

Interviews

It is important while collecting interviews to provide a relaxed and safe environment for the participants to open up in (Flick, 2014). Oftentimes in phenomenological interviewing, the interviews take on more of an informal conversation such as talking over dinner or coffee or even using the framework of walking interviews (Evans & Jones, 2011; Flick, 2014). When Van Manen (2015) writes of phenomenological interviewing, he states that the interviews are meant to gather experiential evidence to gather a richer and deeper understanding of the human phenomenon. With these interviews, the participants did not just tell about an experience, but they explained in detail how they through the experience (Van Manen, 2015). This was very difficult for participants and researcher alike and needed many interviews to revisit and restate questions to allow the experience to truly and deeply unfold. Additionally, it was important to keep track of other things that were happening at that moment and to consider how those factors influenced responses. In the instance of this study, the idea of what was happening in the world at the time of the interviews was vital to the description and analysis of the teachers' experiences as the interviews took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. By recognizing how we understood events from both the past and present and being exposed to people who walk different paths of life, it is critical to investigate the underlying meanings and bridge understanding to those who may not interpret interactions in the same way.

Documents

The documents related to PBIS include but are not limited to the school rules and expectations, any PBIS documentation of leadership and trainings attended, and documentation of the incentive system and an office referral system. Documents will be collected through the research participants' involvement in the study. Documents will be utilized along with interviews to understand how the teachers' lived experiences of using the lesson plans and building expectations influenced their experience with the program in general. These documents will also be used outside of the interview to better understand what was expected of both the teachers and of the students through the use of PBIS.

Journal

Throughout the entire research process, a journal will be kept, keeping track of all the events (community, world, personal, etc.) that were happening at the time of the interviews to track how my own influence or worldly influence may be impacting the interviews and how they were interpreted. This unit of reflexivity was crucial to the study so that I as the researcher can bridle my own interpretations and experiences as I work with the participants to bring forth their experiences to meaning. The journal was kept both in digital and hand-written mediums and was completed during and after the interview process. It was important to record both during and after the interview process to both keep record of any experiences had during the interview while also being present in the interview to maintain a trusting relationship with the participant and to fully interact with the experience that the participants were sharing.

Setting

The study took place across two schools in West Virginia in the Appalachian Region of the United States. One school was an elementary school (Tremont Elementary) while the other

was a middle school (Fairfield Middle). Tremont Elementary School services students in grades pre-kindergarten through 4th grade while Fairfield Middle services students in 5th through 8th grades. Students at Tremont Elementary will move on to Fairfield Middle School as they progress through school. Both schools were either currently or formerly identified as West Virginia Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Cohort Schools. I reached out to the coordinator listed on the WVPBIS website to ask further questions about what a Cohort School was. According to WVPBIS, a cohort school is a school that has been formally trained by WVPBIS and is in their initial year of fully implementing Tier 1 services. Tremont Elementary was listed as a WVPBIS Cohort School during the time period of the study itself (2022) while Fairfield Middle School was identified as a WVPBIS Cohort School during the 2017-2018 school year. Teachers interviewed at Tremont Elementary were current employees of the school while teachers interviewed at Fairfield Middle were employees of Fairfield during the 2017-2018. In one case, there was a participant who was employed by Fairfield Middle School during the 2017-2018 school year who was employed elsewhere during the time of the study, but was still able to provide experiences of the 2017-2018 school year during the time Fairfield was being recognized as a WVPBIS model school.

Participants were initially contacted through their school emails with permission from the principal of Tremont Elementary School in the early spring of 2022. Both email and phone contact were made with the school principal before reaching out to other school faculty members. Initial contact was made from the principal to the faculty members, but after some time had passed, permission was granted from the principal to gather email addresses of staff members from the school website to email directly. Initial e-mail correspondence included a recruitment letter with the intent of the study, IRB information, and contact information for me

(see: Appendix A). The interviews with the elementary school teachers occurred within the last month of school for the 2021-2022 school year. This timing could be important to how the teachers in the study were experiencing their role in PBIS as much of the end of school rewards were happening at the same time of the interviews.

The principal of Fairfield Middle School had changed since the year the school was recognized as a PBIS Cohort School. I contacted the current principal to ask permission about interviewing staff members who were a part of the staff during the model school year. The current principal gave their approval to talk with staff members, and the initial contact was made through a former Fairfield Middle School teacher who I am personally acquainted with through other non-public school related events. She [participant: Sophia], was able to contact other teachers who currently still work for Fairfield Middle and were there during the cohort school year. The interviews with the three middle school teachers also occurred at the end of the school year and even into the summer.

Table 11

Participant Demographics

Participant Name	School	Position	Years of Experience
1. Larry	Tremont Elementary	Counselor	17
2. Brittany	Tremont Elementary	Teacher, Specialist	11
3. Courtney	Tremont Elementary	Teacher, Title 1	13
4. Crystal	Fairfield Middle	Teacher, STEM	19
5. Julia	Fairfield Middle	Teacher, English	5
6. Sophia	Fairfield Middle	Teacher, Special Education/Social Studies	13

Data Collection

There were six total participants in the study. Three of the participants were employed at Tremont Elementary school with three participants were either currently employed at Fairfield Middle school or had been employed at the middle school during the 2017-2018 school year. At the elementary school, there were two teachers in the study and one guidance counselor. The two teachers were not traditional classroom teachers but were Title 1 and music teachers. When I began recruiting participants in the study, I asked the entire faculty of the school in hopes of including classroom teachers in the study, but there were not any classroom teachers able to participate. Participants were each interviewed three times, typically once a week over the course of three weeks. The interviews were intended to last from 30-60 minutes each with the first one typically being the shortest. No interviews were over 60 minutes at a time. Most interviews were held via Zoom software where the participants used an individual non-school affiliated email address, and I used my university-supplied e-mail address and Zoom account. With one participant, Zoom audio software was unavailable for two of the three interviews held; therefore, FaceTime was used as a replacement. All interviews were recorded using Zoom software including the interview taken via FaceTime. All Zoom audio files were transcribed using Otter AI software.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

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Hermeneutic Circle

The hermeneutic circle is a key metaphor in phenomenology that structures my approach to data analysis. Although hermeneutic studies originally were used to interpret biblical or literary texts, Heidegger and Gadamer took an approach with hermeneutic phenomenology. This allowed

for the interpretation of written language and spoken language as well to aid in the interpretation of lived experiences (Laverty, 2003; Vagle, 2009).

The hermeneutic circle, illustrated in Figure 4 as adapted from Vagle (2016), represents how hermeneutic phenomenology is always in motion. The phenomenon is the central idea (the core of the spiral), while the experiences that continually surround the phenomena have many layers and represent a fluid motion shifting through time, space, body, and relationships (Vagle, 2018; Van Manen, 2016a).

Figure 4

The hermeneutic circle (adapted from text)
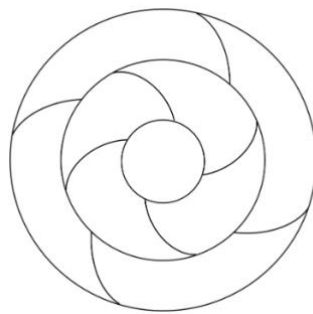
(Vagle, 2018 p. 29)

Previously I discussed Macbeth's views (2001) and how a goal of reflexivity is to push the bounds of the hermeneutic circle. These considerations could be illustrated as adding arrows pointing both ways within the circle or adding more layers around the ring as a researcher travels in-and-out of consciousness.

Conversely, the "essential core" (Figure 5) relates more to Husserlian ways of phenomenology in which there is a center from which the "essence" of an object is explained. "Husserl was interested in what he called "turning to the things themselves," rather than arriving

at subjective meanings, objective meanings, or predictive and explanatory theoretical explanations of human experience."

Figure 5

The Essential Core (Adapted from text)
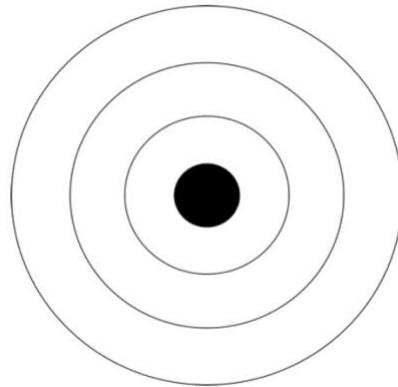
(Vagle, 2018, p. 30).

The essential core does not have the same endless pattern as the hermeneutic circle. Each ring has physical bounds that end instead of connecting with others. In this regard, I will use the hermeneutic circle to enter "into a dialogue with these meanings, rather than describing an essence of these meanings" (Vagle, 2018, p. 34).

Giorgi (in Vagle, 2018) advocates for the whole-part-whole analysis, not setting up an "a priori" look for "shifts in meaning" through the multiple re-reads. When analyzing a phenomenological interview, the data should first be read through in its entirety before being pulled apart and dissected to look more closely at the dialogue of the interview and the experience being shared unfolding. These pieces that unfold were be broken into "parts" of the whole to be further analyzed, with follow up interviews, multiple rounds of reflexive journaling and writing. Since each participant was interviewed multiple times (Bevan, 2014; Vagle, 2016), it is important to remain open to the details and experiences that unfold to change the path of questions to follow the natural opening. Interviews happened multiple times throughout the

research process as phenomenology is an interpretive act (Vagle, 2009). Just as seen in the hermeneutic spiral, the "answers" we find in the analysis process are never final and are always shifting as the Lifeworld of the participants continues to change from day to day and year to year (Vagle, 2009).

Because multiple data sources were used throughout this research, it is important to discuss here how all of the collected data will be interpreted and used. Once interviews were established, I used the first round of interviews to establish a trusting relationship with each teacher in the study. This was also an opportune time to collect any school-based documentation regarding PBIS in the classroom, because these conversations were not invasive and led into further experiential conversation in the following interviews. After each interview, there was an established time for reflective journaling and bridling of my own thoughts and experiences while making notes throughout and transcribing the recent interview data. Once all interviews were collected, the large collection of thematic document coding, interview transcripts, reflective journaling and anecdotal notes were brought together as what Vagle (2009) writes as the first "whole" in the Whole-Part-Whole analysis framework. The "Whole" will be the documents and the data collected from all teachers. Once moving to the "part", these pieces were teased apart in their own sections looking for common themes before looking at all of the parts across the research for common themes amongst different teachers and the documents used in the school setting. By bringing all these pieces together, the final "whole" included a thematic analysis of the documents of the research participants.

Data analysis occurred in the moment and immediately after each interview through a reflective process. Further data analysis occurred as the interviews happened to go through a

whole part whole analysis and find the common experiences amongst the teachers and individual

teachers over the course of their multiple interviews.

The interviews were analyzed by using the whole part whole analysis approach (Vagle,

2018) (Figure 5). To use the whole-part-whole analysis, it required multiple readings of the data

with a different purpose each time. The first round of reading through the data was to gain a

sense of the entire description (Vagle, 2018). This step is important to not yet make assumptions

or set up a coding system for the interviews or notes, but to take note, while reading, of "shifts in

meaning" as noted by Giorgi (Vagle, 2018). Lastly, these "shifts" were noted when rereading the

"whole" of the data to "transform the natural attitude into phenomenologically psychological

sensitive expressions" (Vagle, 2018, p. 60).

Document analysis was used with the interviews to interpret how the program was

implemented to the school and what types of lessons were given to the students through their

social-emotional learning time. Because of WV State Code 2510, all schools in West Virginia

are required to have at least 25 minutes daily devoted to character, career, and social-emotional

learning (WV Code 2510). Documents were collected through the research participants'

involvement in the study. Documents were utilized using interviews to understand how the

teachers' lived experiences of using the lesson plans and building expectations influenced their

experience with the program in general. These documents were used outside of the interview to

better understand what was expected of both the teachers and the students through the use of

PBIS. Document analysis is a multi-faceted qualitative research method, but in this case,

documents will be analyzed as social documents. Because these documents are providing a

structure or rule for how the PBIS programming is established in the school, the documents are

seen as technical documents (Flick, 2014). Document analysis can be accomplished through

thematic coding for common ideas and high frequency words (Flick, 2014). When using the documents in this research such as WV State Policy, school-based rules and expectations, school referral language and reward language, this research will be aimed in coding common themes that fall into a Growth Minded or Grit framed language. The documents that will need to be analyzed include but are not limited to the school rules and expectations, any PBIS documentation of leadership and training attended, and documentation of the incentive system and an office referral system.

Whole Part Whole Analysis

I applied Mark Vagle's Whole-Part-Whole analysis (Vagle, 2008) to the interview data collected. Interviews were analyzed by listening back to the transcripts while also closely reading each transcript multiple times. To use the Whole-Part-Whole process, initial coding of overarching themes and language was implemented. These initial findings were then revisited to find commonalities between the participants. After establishing the themes of the situated narratives discussed below, interviews were read and listened back to multiple times to organize participants' discussion into the appropriate themes. Direct quotes were then organized into subcategories and discussed by also threading through my personal reflexivity notes and journals. Reflexivity journals were kept through the research process from the initial interview and through listening back to the transcription data. It was important as the researcher to continue to be reflexive even through the process of listening back to the interviews as new findings were constantly discovered and more questions were constantly coming to the surface of my consciousness. The reflexive notes embedded in the situated narratives below are a collection of journal entries from the entire data analysis process.

Ethics

To maintain a trusting relationship with the teachers and school community in the study, all names of people and locations have been changed. It is important to protect the identity of those in the study in case any conflicts arise with controversy within the use of the program in the school and the efficacy the teachers feel it has with their students. Though there was careful consideration in all questions asked, as the researcher I must approach this with an open mind and not meet my understandings of rural education and PBIS cloud what the experiences of the teachers in this particular space are while we are in the interview process. The interview questions for the study may be challenging for some participants to answer, so as Van Manen states of phenomenological interviewing, there must be an established trust between the researcher and the participant. Because of this, there were multiple interview times scheduled to first have conversation of building a rapport with the teachers in the study and to have a common trust in the purpose of the study, the use of the interviews, and that the participants feel safe in participating in the questions.

To protect relationships with the participants and to ensure their confidentiality within the paper, certain precautions will be taken. Because the interviews may be focused at times around personal experiences with trauma, it will be important to not push the participants for more information when they are becoming distressed. As the interviewer, I offered time for breaks and reflection and encouraged participants not to share any detail that may be too difficult for them to talk about in the given setting. Because the participants talked about the school they work in, it will also be important to shield identities not only in the data and findings, but to not talk about what participants have said across interviews. In such a small setting, identities could be easily uncovered if discussed in detail about personal experiences. There may be times where a teacher

is recalling an experience that is obviously pointing to a certain student or community member, and the identity of these individuals must also be protected. Through reflective journaling and discussions with participants, the details will be masked to the best of the ability of the study. Looking ahead, it is possible that teachers may not feel comfortable discussing such events and the sample of participants for the study will need to be adjusted. If this were to occur, changes would be made to the methodology to include a different set of participant data.

Situated Narratives

The following narratives are organized into two sections, one for Tremont Elementary School and the other for Fairfield Middle School. The two schools have been separated based on the timing of the implementation of the PBIS program and how the program was implemented. Common themes between the two schools will be discussed at the conclusion of each schools' individual themes. The study was divided into three interviews. The initial interview was used to establish relationships between myself as the researcher and the participants while also gaining an understanding of each individual participants' role in the school and in the greater school community. The second interview was used to gain an understanding of each participants' experience with using PBIS, and the third interview was used to discuss the teachers' experiences using grit or resiliency frameworks along with the PBIS school expectations. As the themes emerge from the interviews, my own reflexive statements will be woven throughout the analysis. Throughout the interview process, I bridled my own experiences to the best of my ability to remain neutral in asking questions and deepening my understanding of the experiences of the participants. These reflexive moments from my bridling journal are weaved into the interviews to illustrate the narratives.

Chapter 4: Findings on Educators' Experiences at Tremont Elementary School

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the lived experience of Appalachian educators at Tremont Elementary School who use Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as their behavior management system. Specifically, this research aims to explore how these teachers experience PBIS, and how they perceive its efficacy for elementary students who may be experiencing childhood stress or trauma. By using influences from Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology and Lifeworlds Theory from Dahlberg, I used the experience of the educators and my own reflexive notes to better understand the experiences of the participants in light of my research questions. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the experiences of the educators at Fairfield Middle School.

Tremont Elementary

"Oh, God, there's… it's equally unsuccessful as it is successful" (Larry)

Tremont Elementary School is a small school within rural West Virginia. The school is home to roughly 114 students in grades Pre-K through 4th grade and has a "family" feel with many large and extended families living within the district. I worked with three educators at Tremont Elementary School. They were Larry, the school counselor; Brittany, a specials teacher; and Courtney, the Title 1 literacy teacher. The participants in the study are situated in the school community in differing ways, but all agree that the close-knit community feel of Tremont is noticeable in the school setting. This sentiment is communicated, for example, by statements such as, *"So I love the small school. You get to know students and the staff. They're wonderful to*

work with." (Courtney). Brittany was not from this region of the country and initially came to this school as a job opportunity and because of a personal relationship. Brittany explained, *"I'm getting to know the communities better. But it was, it did feel just like being an outsider when I started but yeah, everybody took me in" (Brittany).* Larry returned to the Tremont area after college and working elsewhere, to help take care of his father. Larry shared that he grew up close to Tremont in a larger town in a neighboring county, but even though he had moved around a lot, his family was native to the area: *"Rosemont County where Tremont Elementary School is, where the [name redacted] clan originally landed in West Virginia, in 1867. So I'm back amongst people that I know, I graduated from Oak Grove High School (pseudonym), so I'm familiar and still have family here" (Larry).*

Now that I have introduced how each of the teachers is situated in the Tremont community, I will discuss the various themes that they shared across several in-depth interviews with each of them. Readers will notice an interweaving of my bracketed reflections, showing multi-layered understandings of experience related to the PBIS reform.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, PBIS programs are built upon undertones of capitalism. The Tier 1 interventions are largely based around students earning points to spend on various prizes in the school setting. These interventions are focused more on incentivizing behavior as opposed to analyzing behaviors (Tyre & Feuerborn, 2021). Additionally, the program itself and the corresponding character and behavior programs, often labeled as Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs, cost the schools and districts both time and money to implement and maintain. In Theme 1: The Business of Behavior, I will discuss the very real costs of running a PBIS program, the unique ways in which the programs in use are maintained, and how points, a

hallmark of the PBIS system, are used by students within the school. Further discussion on the

ways that students can earn their points can be found in Theme 3: Points, Clips, and Slips.

Theme 1: The Business of Behavior; Capital Implications of PBIS

It feels odd to begin my findings with a discussion of an obscure rock band, quirkily named the

Aquabats. However, my study diverges from the normal in some ways, and in this wild hybrid of

the sea and sky, I found my first clues to the "mystery" of how PBIS was started at Tremont

Elementary School.

Aquabats

> Now, this year, I created a program with the Aquabats ska band in California. And it's really an acknowledgement and motivation plan for kids. Because COVID has killed fun in schools for everybody. So I dressed up like an Aquabat, they sent me free videos, like 10 of them [videos], they made videos, hey, you can do this, Tremont keep working hard! (Larry)

> Larry was very excited to tell me about the Aquabats. He dove right into explaining that

his role in the school as the guidance counselor starts early in the morning with AM bus duty, a

great way to drum up support for his mission of integrating PBIS goals broadly throughout the

school community.

> The biggest selling point was I'm at the school opening car doors in the Aquabats uniforms. I'll get on there and say, hey, I spoke to the Aquabats for you. And because you're awesome, you're coming to school, you're doing your best… I have nominated you guys for membership into the Legion of Righteous Comrades. So if we have a great year and we show growth, and we're doing the best we can do, we can be Legion Outpost Number one on the planet!

> The Aquabats, as mentioned previously by Larry, are a Ska band from California. Ska is

a genre of music that is a mix of punk-rock and jazz with the band typically playing instruments

such as drums and electric guitars alongside horn sections such as the saxophone. Their founding

member, Christian Jacobsen, is also known for being a creator of the now off-air children's'

television program *Yo Gabba Gabba!*. The Aquabats themselves even had a television program

from 2012-2018 lasting a total of 22 episodes (IMDB, 2022). However, until now, the Aquabats

had not played a part in school behavior intervention programs. Larry, a new guidance counselor

to the Tremont community, designed this plan on his own.

> Long story short, the Aquabats said they would do Tremont Elementary as a pilot
> program. Okay, videos for free, whatever you say. So I asked for 12 videos at different
> times throughout the year for motivation. And they came through each one members of
> the group took one of our topics that we had responsibility, respect, safety, kindness, and
> attendance, or coming to school. (Larry)

By becoming a pilot program, this would allow other schools to use the Aquabats

characters, songs, and language to be used in other schools. One phrase really stuck out to me in

Larry's interviews, "The Legion of Righteous Comrades." Larry explained to me that the goal of

the program was to be "awesome" and follow the 5 pillars of PBIS in the school so that at the

end of the school year, students would all be able to become members of the Legion of

Righteous Comrades. Larry focused so much of his time on the Aquabats program that it was

important to understand the context of the Aquabats. To my surprise, the Aquabats band was tied

to a website called "Latter-Day Saint Musicians," where the description of the band details the

religious affiliation to the Mormon Church. This seemed similar to the information about the

Covey Foundation that I shared in Chapter 2, that the very popular producer of Leader in Me/7

Habits of Happy Kids programs and materials used by thousands of public schools and

specifically PBIS programs, is grounded in the Mormon church. The lyrics of the Aquabats song

are not all outwardly religious. Many of their songs are silly, high-energy, and kid friendly.

However, there are song lyrics that mention becoming "kings". Normally, this may be innocent,

but in the context of the music pushing back against the villain and becoming kings is signaled in the Holy Bible of followers of Christ becoming Kings and Queens.

The term "righteous" itself then began to shift in meaning when thinking of applying it to the idea of Christianity. The "Legion of Righteous Comrades" was mentioned more than once throughout my time talking to Larry, and at one time in our last interview, Larry mentioned that the launch of the pilot program would be mentioned in the next "Aquacadet Faction Newsletter". I had previously navigated the Aquabats website, but this time added new keywords such as "The Legion of Righteous Comrades". From this, I was taken to a Kickstarter webpage. A Kickstarter is a Public Benefit Corporation (PBC) to fund creative projects (Kickstarter, 2022). The Legion of Righteous Comrades was the name given to the top donors for the Aquabats. These top-tier donors were promised multiple personal belongings such as CDs, vinyl records, t-shirts, badges, and personal "friending" on social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter.

Once reading about the progress of the Kickstart on the Aquabats fan page, The Legion of Righteous Comrades seemed upset that not all the promises have been fulfilled. The page was full of people asking if they had yet received their merchandise and why the second album had not been released. The Gloopy Aquabats storefront also has other merchandise for sale like the *"anti-negativity helmet"* Larry mentioned in his interview, selling for $35, and a 2022 tour shirt for $25. The 2022 tour included 16 concerts from late June to early July.

Larry even had the opportunity to integrate the Aquabats program he had designed locally, with the assistance, according to Larry, of Dr. Bradley, who is also an author to a self-assessment PBIS program.

> For this program, I met with Dr. Bradley, she has a private practice that does all the PBIS stuff in Seattle. She and I teamed up. I talked about how all the posters talked about the program. I was in full Aquabat gear through the whole presentation. (Larry)

Reflexivity Note: All of this information was extremely eye-opening to me, as a researcher not expecting to find it, but primed by the critical educational scholarship to be open to better understanding the "business" of behavior management, and especially PBIS, in schools

In this specific case, the local person in charge of the PBIS program used their personal experiences and interests to implement a program they designed. When anyone is designing a program, it is inevitable that their own experiences and biases will be woven throughout the curriculum and its implementation. In this case, the behavioral program was built upon a seemingly failing band by a fan who became interested in their message through the eyes of his own children. School- based capital in the form of Larry's intensive labor was linked up to the capital of the American economy when the students were set up to purchase Aquabats merchandise with the PBIS points earned through following the expectations set forth by their teachers and essentially, the Aquabats themselves. Larry shared that the Aquabats were making the videos for free, but is anything free? The simple exposure the kids would be having at school to the energetic and uplifting characters of the Aquabats band could fuel their desire to purchase the merchandise. The Legion of Righteous Comrades was set aside on the Aquabats website as a place for the highest donors to be honored, but every member of the school community, most of the children and families living in high poverty circumstances, was set up to be a potential member of the Legion of Righteous Comrades by the end of the school year. The school was able to purchase the Aquabats merchandise wholesale in order to prime the pump. Shirts, hats, bracelets and other small items became available for the students to purchase with their points

Reflexivity Notes: Was this an action to fund the band and pilot the Aquabats' rebranding

behind the guise of the PBIS behavior plan? If this pilot program continues to grow and is implemented in other schools in a way similar to the spread of other teacher-created phenomena such as ABC Bootcamp (TKS, 2021), the Aquabats would have a ready market available for selling their minisodes and anti-negativity merchandise to schools. Who is gaining from this transaction?

Initially while learning about the Aquabats, I was really holding tight to the tie to the Mormon church, and even though I still feel like some of the music has religious undertones to it, I feel like that could also be my own experiences and knowledge about the Covey Foundation that is making me feel that way. Larry talked a lot about the Aquabats, even from interview one where I wasn't asking as many questions about PBIS as I was about his normal day-to-day experiences. It's just that his day to day is truly inundated with Aquabats materials. I wonder how the kids truly felt about the program, did they really get into the characters? Since the TV show is no longer available and the YouTube channel has not been active for the past 4 months, I wonder how involved the students were with the characters. From my understanding, the Aquabats and Gloopy Industries were using the term "Legion of Righteous Comrades" to describe their top tier donors. Will the school eventually pay the Gloopy Industry? Or is the pilot program that Larry designed thought to bring in so many more schools that they deserve the status of "Legion of Righteous Comrades"? It is also interesting that in the same way that the Aquabats are relying on crowdfunding their next album, schools, and in this case, Tremont, are relying on donations from families and ministries to fund the school (discussed below).

WorldVision, Church Involvement, and Community Involvement

PBIS as a program to implement into the school, one that costs money to purchase and maintain. In addition to the cost of the program itself, many schools are also attempting to find funds for school "stores" for students to spend their points at, or to fund field trips off campus for students to experience. At Tremont, there seems to be a great deal of community involvement in fundraising for expenses from both community members and from religious affiliations.

> We have a lot of the Squeezy balls and fidget toys. Again, WorldVision, a group in Philippi close to us, donates a lot of stuff to us. We have Legos, we had a church donate a whole bunch of games for us. We have some Aquabats merchandise that we got wholesale like stickers and some socks and a backpack… coloring books. So we have a smattering of things, like little stuffed animals. (Larry)

WorldVision is a Christian Ministry Outreach program "helping children, families, and their communities overcome poverty and injustice" (WorldVision 2022). This partnership seemed like a normal integrated part of the school community. None of the participants spent much time explaining the partnership as it seemed like it was a typical routine for the school to use WorldVision as a resource for the school community. The WorldVision office in Philippi, West Virginia is known as the "Appalachian Headquarters" for WorldVision. On the WorldVision homepage, there are headline stories about hunger in Afghanistan, roadblocks to equitable learning in Cambodia due to COVID-19, clean water in Ethiopia and healing from the loss of a spouse in West Virginia.

Reflexivity Note: Though in my personal experience growing up, parents were typically asked to pay for the trip or to make an annual donation to the school through direct donations or through sales, this is not the case in my more recent experience. In reflecting on these conversations, the donations were needed and appreciated to do extra events throughout the school year. However, these donations were constantly in relation to ministries or private donations. The constant comparison of Appalachia and more specifically, West Virginia, to

third-world countries continues to perpetuate the narrative that Appalachian people are living in other-worldly conditions compared to the rest of the United States. WorldVision classifies itself as a Christian Ministry that is "child focused and community based" (WorldVision 2022). This is such a tangled web that I struggle with as well. There are people and families situated within Appalachia who struggle with access to clean water or adequate housing. There are also very wealthy people situated in the same regions who could be at fault for the systematic issues that exist. This does not mean that all affluent people in the region are at fault for the systemic issues that exist; however, those in power to make change are not effected by these problems and do not share the same experiences of hardship. Nonetheless, the narrative that Appalachians need help, for example through a sponsorship of $39 a month, continues the script mentioned by Sherfinski (2019) that people in Appalachia have a lower quality of life than the rest of the United States.

In addition to the donations from WorldVision and various other church donations, there were also donations from staff members' family:

> *"Someone donated money for the whole school to go to the movies for Christmas time… Yeah. It was actually my mom. So it was nice of her."*

Reflexivity Note: Why do educators rely on donations from businesses and even family members to fund their schools? I have experienced this as well with my mom and stepdad buying countless boxes of colored pencils and sets of earbuds for my classroom. If the schools are publicly funded, why are private (and religious) corporations still needing to donate to schools to have them run [at least more] efficiently? This is rooted in the issues mentioned from Schafft (2016) that Appalachian schools are more underfunded than schools in other parts of the country.

The School Store

The school store is where students can spend their points they earned. During the interviews, the school year was winding down and students were provided opportunities to spend their points. Even though it was the final days of school, it was only the second time that students had been able to go to the school store this year. Courtney talked to me about what was available at the school store.

> Games? Like balls, foam putty, erasers, card games, candy, chips…um, Uno and, you know, so it's just like the things that a child would want and they have some, like, Aquabat material merchandise. (Courtney)

Brittany discussed the items she saw in the store as well.

> But if it didn't seem like a wide variety, that [Lego Set] was the most expensive that I saw. Others was just like, the balls that have slime or whatever inside it. That squishy stuff. Slap Bracelets. That was what most of the items that I saw. (Brittany)

Reflexivity Note: Things that a child would want…How do we know these are things that a child would want? Of course, there are common things in toy stores and the aisle caps of large stores like Walmart and Target. But how do we know these are the things that kids want? Was there an interest inventory taken over the types of items that the kids would want to spend their points on? Or were these the items that could be donated through Christian Ministries? What if a student has earned points, but does not have an interest in anything in the store? Are they forced to spend their points to keep the school economy efficient? Can they save their points from year to year? This even seemed like a gray area when speaking to the research participants.

These items at the school store were assigned a point value, much like any other item at a store would have a price tag on it. The students were able to see how many points they have and go to the store to purchase their prizes. Because these points were awarded to students based on

their adherence to the school expectations, the students who had more success in the school environment would be able to purchase more items, but in the experience of the two educators, that was not always the case. Brittany and Courtney both spoke about how on the day of the shopping, not all students were treated the same, and furthermore, they were shocked about the amount of points that some students had versus others that were "expected" to have a much higher point value.

I know that the couple I'm thinking of that had a lot of points are ones that go to the counselor regularly. (Brittany)

Brittany had mentioned that during lunch especially, she noticed Larry coming into the cafeteria and awarding points to students for what she assumed was attendance, even though she felt like it was a disturbance to the cafeteria expectations. She also noticed that there were students who frequently visited Larry that had more points than others. Courtney talked about the chaos that ensued on these last days of school where the students were able to shop.

> "The counselor, he didn't have any value for the items, he was just letting the kids fill up a bucket full of stuff. And you know, the system is based on points and value and then you don't give points or value. What's the point of having PBIS?" (Courtney)

Courtney shared her frustration with the inequities in how points were given to students. While she felt the points needed to be given with fidelity for good reason, she experienced Larry letting students take whatever they wanted from the store without regard for the points. While looking at this issue from Larry's point of view, he discussed his experiences changing the price of the store items per grade level and per student based on the amount of points they had available.

> "I'm not going to tell you teachers how to give your points. I'm going to let You do it however you like. Whatever benefits you because I will make sure that each classroom goes to the school store independently." (Larry)

Reflexivity Note: I can just imagine this happening. School is almost out and the kids are very excited to be shopping in the store for what I think is only the second time all year. Even though giving students points for following the school norms has left me with enough questions and conflict, it is also hard to understand just handing out store items to some students while others are exchanging their points for something. If the other students are seeing and understanding this, do they feel like their points have no value? If Larry is changing the point value based on what the students have, I wonder how this is being translated to the students so that there is not an understanding from their point of view that their point's value really doesn't matter and they can have what they want from the store regardless.

I change the points based on the grade level and the amount of points that they have, because I can look at that, I never have different classes go at the same time. Okay. So if they have lesser points, it's okay. So the points was really for me to see how often and how much teacher given are given the points. Here, I mean, none of the teachers reinforced taking your badge out in the hallway. (Larry)

If the points were really just to see if the teachers were giving them, then the store is not actually measuring any value of worth for the students following expectations. Teachers may not be awarding points for a variety of reasons that the participants mentioned such as not wanting to try one more thing, forgetting, or falling back onto previous methods more often such as clothespins and Paw Slips. If teachers are not awarding points, their students will still be able to shop at the store under the scenario that Larry explained, which would seem to cause a discrepancy in student understanding of their environment. This would also seemingly cause a disruption in the staff climate and consistency in program implementation. The section below discusses school-wide implementation and the struggles that the participants experienced.

Theme 2: Consistency & Relationships: The Struggle with School-Wide Implementation

The Staff Climate

> My supervising psychologist when I told him. 'Look, you know, [name redacted], I don't know if I want to be a deputy sheriff. Or if I want to be a school counselor', and his response to me was well, you know Larry, it's the same job. I said, 'What do you mean, it's the same job?', he says, 'Well, as a cop, you're going to go to places where you're needed. Nobody's going to want to listen to you. Nobody really wants you to be there. You're going to have to make a hard decision. But luckily, you have a gun.' I said, 'Well, how's that like being a school counselor?' He says, 'You're gonna go to a school, you're gonna go into a class where if a teacher has been there for more than one year, they are using you as their new planning period, half of the teachers will leave the room, half of the teachers will stay. Nobody cares what you have to say. They're not going to adapt it into their curriculum whatsoever. You're on your own, and nobody gives a shit what you say or do. Nobody understands your job. They think that if Johnny has an emotional outburst in here, he should see the counselor when that's not a mental health problem.' He was right. (Larry)

When talking with the elementary teachers, the idea of their staff-wide relationship was a topic that seemed to me as an outsider to be tiptoed around. Larry, above, shares his frustration with teachers in general: teachers do not understand his role as a counselor and do not care to understand what he does. He continued throughout all three of his interviews with me to discuss how teachers and counselors are not the same and his mindset is *"not a teacher mindset,"* which can affect how the rules and expectations for PBIS points are implemented throughout the different spaces in the building, Larry felt like an outsider as a first-year employee.

> I am a foreigner. You know, my ideas are way out there because I'm not from there. It's not traditional. It's kid-centered. (Larry)

It is here that Larry is implying through his experiences that he sees the school as a kid-centered place while the teachers focus more on themselves as the leader of the school and approach the day through standards-centered methods. He also touches on this idea when he talks about teachers "teaching to the test" and being concerned with getting through all of their standards. He adds that this is not only a problem he is having at Tremont, but this is a problem

for guidance counselors everywhere. Guidance counselors are their own entity, and teachers do

not understand or even care to understand what they do in his experiences.

> Every school that I've been in. And I went to the Northwestern PBIS Conference and presented the Aquabats program. Everybody that was in my session, and there were 70, said the same thing. Teacher buy-in is tough. (Larry)

Reflexivity Note: I was interested in what he presented about the Aquabats at the Northwestern PBIS Conference. West Virginia is not in the northwest, so he either attended this conference to be with former colleagues or perhaps he has been working on the Aquabats program before he came to West Virginia. He did mention in his interviews he previously lived in a Northwestern state. I tried to find his conference presentation, but my search turned up nothing. Maybe I can't find it because I was not a participant in the conference. However, while looking at the Northwestern PBIS Conference, the dates line up to the season of Ramadan. There is a note on the page stating that PBIS is supporting their Muslim educators by "having halal foods, boxed food options to eat before and after sunset, and dedicated prayer rooms" (NWPBIS, 2022). All of those things are great, but truly, why is there a conference scheduled during Ramadan? I think you would be hard pressed to find many conferences happening during Christmas. If PBIS as a company is not inclusive of its teachers, how can we expect the teachers to model acceptance for all of their students?

One really interesting piece about the Aquabats program specifically was the disconnect

that the teachers felt between the PBIS program and the use of the Aquabats to implement it.

While Larry felt that he had been very explicit in describing the program and rolling it out,

Brittany made no mention of it when I asked what kind of characters or supplementary programs

were used with PBIS.

> No. We have posters with expectations for each area. Classroom, hallway, cafeteria, bathroom? Yeah, I don't know if they've actually been told what these are for. (Brittany)

Because Brittany was splitting time between two schools, it was important to also speak with Courtney about their program. In this area, there are typically not music or other arts teachers at each building individually, so they split time between campuses. Courtney seemed more familiar with the program but focused on how engaged Larry was with the program, not the other teachers or even the students. When I asked Courtney about the PBIS program at Tremont Elementary, she said they use the Aquabats for videos to watch in the morning and for the students to become "Aquacadets" at the end of the year.

> He was like, really engaged with it. I mean, he would dress up as an Aquabat character, like his lanyard always had an A on it so he was he was like with the Aquabats. (Courtney)

When hearing all three participants talk about the Aquabats program in their own experience, it becomes clearer just how distant they all seem from each other to me as an outsider to the school. It was rare that all three participants said the same thing, whether about what the Aquabats did or how they gave students points through the program. This sort of staff climate is difficult to navigate and inequitable for the students navigating different adults who all have different implementation strategies and understandings of the program. It did seem, however, that Brittany and Courtney would lean into the lack of training (discussed below) for their views on the program with Larry continuing to talk about the differences in teaching and counseling he sees in his day-to-day life as a counselor.

> That is part of getting teachers to understand what it is we're looking at. You know, they really don't have a clue what I do. They don't know. And I explain it to them. But in today's society, everybody's a counselor. In every school I've been in, I've said, look, let's do each other a favor. I didn't spend years getting a master's degree in counseling to do the same thing that you do. (Larry)

Before COVID-19 closed schools in March of 2020, there was a different counselor in the building. It was in 2019-2020 that Tremont Elementary School initially began to train

educators and staff and implement PBIS in the building, but it was quickly stopped due to the

pandemic. The staff had just begun discussing what rules and expectations were going to be

applied throughout the school day, and there was not a way to attain this information online, so

the program was halted for some time. The 2020-2021 school year was another year of

inconsistency with hybrid scheduling, quarantines, and remote learning without much warning

when the county map turned to "red" showing a rapid density of new COVID cases in the county

and prompting a shut down. PBIS was not implemented again for another year, and the school

continued to mainly focus on using their clip chart system, which I will discuss in more detail

later in this chapter. As part of the clip system, Paw Slips were sent home as a reminder when the

expectations were not being met. When the 2021-2022 school year began, the former counselor

who was initially planning PBIS left the position, and Larry stepped in, beginning the Aquabats

programming. This shift in the school counselor position and outlook on PBIS seemed to be

another roadblock in the full implementation of the program, and the Tremont teachers' and

staff's ability to understand it and implement it consistently.

> The two counselors we've had are very different in their approaches. Um, one, for the
> initial counselor, I would say more calming, encouraging. Talking more one on one. She
> did group lessons as well. The current counselor is energetic. When he meets with
> students, they usually play games while talking. And it is different personalities."
> (Brittany)

This transition of counselors had to have been hard for the staff to adjust to. Coming out of the

pandemic back to full-time learning while still navigating mask wearing, assigned seats, cohorts

and quarantines was a lot to manage. Adding in a new behavior management program with a

new person situated within a leadership role for the program would be tough! Larry seemed

frustrated with teachers in his interview at times, that he was working so hard to build a good

thing, and the teachers were not moving forward with him. I asked Larry,

[Have you ever had any conversations with teachers who work there? Previously, even before COVID, maybe that didn't experience working with a full time counselor? Have they shared anything with you about what it's like, before and after?]
Not really, not really? Nope. Now, the family service people have. But you know, they do what I do, you know, I mean, they have an idea of the mindset that I do. And that's not a teacher mindset. (Larry)

Reflexivity Note: The staff climate to me feels terrible. The teachers in the study seem to be able to work together relatively well, but knowing how the guidance counselor feels towards teachers has been a hard pill to swallow. Though he must outwardly be somewhat patient with the teachers or just does not simply interact with them, his "they don't give a shit" attitude has had my brain rattling for days. How can a school possibly function in a positive way for students to see everyone working together for them if one essential part has such a negative view of other members of the staff? Sometimes, the tone and body language I saw from Brittany made me feel like there was more to say, as if she was holding back. This staff has been through so much change over the past few years, it would be difficult to change so much about the classroom, and Larry is, to me, ignoring that. He is upset that things are not going his way with the Aquabats, but I personally had only vaguely heard of the Aquabats, and I listen to some Ska music. I have to imagine if you are not familiar with Ska music or had a child watching "The Hub" network 10 years ago, the Aquabats may be a completely foreign concept!

Trainings

So, we just ran with it this year. We had a counselor that said he was familiar with the program. So he was kind of in charge of it. And he got in contact with the Aquabats. (Courtney)

PBIS training in West Virginia is typically hosted by the West Virginia PBIS center and through the Marshall University Autism Center (WVPBIS, 2022). In this scenario, Tremont Elementary School was a cohort school for the 2021-2022 school year, meaning they were formally identified as a school being trained by WVPBIS to implement Tier 1 strategies in their school. Typically, and in the case of Tremont Elementary, the full staff is not formally trained on PBIS, but a small group of faculty members, usually an administrator, counselor and a few teachers are included in the training and they bring the information back to the rest of the staff in the form of a professional development session.

> Um, I actually wasn't involved with the trainings. There were like, three or four other teachers that were involved. He [the counselor] was one of them. And then there is like, the principal, community and service. Family Engagement. And I think the second grade teacher went. And the special ed teacher went a couple times. (Courtney)

I asked Courtney if the individuals who went to the training came back and had a meeting with the rest of the staff.

"No, no, no." (Courtney)

It seems that most, if not all, of the staff training this year has been completed through e-mail communication and reading material. Both Brittany and Courtney talk about their understanding of PBIS being about giving points for students following expectations. PBIS, however, is not just "giving points" even though it is commonly interpreted that way, causing many of the inequitable problems discussed below.

> And the entire staff has not been professionally trained. The principal counselor, and one other teacher have gone to an actual seminar and trained with it, and, and they brought it back. So I don't know how much of what they learned was passed on to the teachers. I then, other than that, just the basics. I didn't get any training on it. (Brittany)

Larry agrees, there needs to be more teacher training for teachers to implement the program. To him, teachers are still very involved in negative reinforcement practices and wonder

why corporal punishment is not still used in school as it was when he was younger. There is a

great difference in earning points and "getting your ass beat", and it is only through education of

the teachers, from Larry's perspective that we can get there.

> We have to have more teacher training, we do have to do that and get away from the
> more didactic models. I'm all about, you know, you have to have discipline and
> accountability. There's ways to do it. I've actually had to tell teachers when I was in
> school, every teacher had a paddle by the door, and they say, 'how come we don't do that
> anymore?' Because it's fucking barbaric. That's why. What I learned was shut up or you
> get your ass beat. (Larry)

Overall, there is confusion about the discipline and accountability that Larry mentions

and the tie to giving points that Courtney and Brittany focus on in their ideas of PBIS. In the

following section, I will discuss the participants' experiences with awarding points to students.

There is a lack of consistency across the board in awarding points, what the points are given for,

and how the students are able to spend their points in the school store.

"I think the lack of training really plays a big role in it." (Brittany)

Reflexivity Note: Everyone seemed dismayed by the lack of training they had been through and the

confusion throughout the building about awarding points. If the teachers and faculty members who

were not included in the formal training have only been notified by e-mail how to use the program, its

no wonder to me that they are solely focused on giving out points to the students for the expectations.

I keep wondering every time a participant talks about the school pillars- what exactly is respect? How

do we define respect? Are students being taught respect at home in the same ways that respect is

expected in the school setting? PBIS is often discussed in the literature that there needs to be common

language used throughout, but this is not a culturally inclusive practice. If the language being used at

school that is not something that a family practices at home, then the school is trying to change that

family structure to model its expectations. I can't pin down a definite definition of "kindness" or

"safety". When I think of these words it would be respecting others' decisions and opinions. When I am thinking of safety in school, I think of gun violence, not running in the hallway. I think of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Are YOU (the child) safe at home? Do you have a safe place to sleep? Are we teaching students about body safety to prevent instances of abuse and neglect? The word safety reaches far beyond the realms of walking in a straight line in the hallway. Furthermore, how is it equitable to reward students for safety? If these practices are not modeled in all homes, then it is an unjust system rewarding those whose personal values match the values of the school. Perhaps, moving forward, there should be more "training" for teachers on student safety and cultural awareness to be kind when those around us may have differing values than our own.

Consistency in Awarding Points

One major theme that I heard from all three participants was about the lack of consistency with how points were awarded and who was awarding them. The teachers that volunteered to participate in the study all used PBIS but made mention of other teachers who were not using the program.

> And I talked with the library teacher about it after we talked last time, and she said that she doesn't have, hasn't even downloaded the app and doesn't give any points. So I highly doubt that the gym or art teacher did either. (Brittany)

There also seems to be a lack of communication in what the expectations are and how points are awarded for each common theme in the building. While some teachers give points for their perception of kindness or responsibility, others don't give points at all. Some faculty members give points for attendance while others see where their presence in certain settings can be a disruption to the expectation of the setting.

> I haven't talked with others about how they use this. I'm not sure. In the hallway, I have seen other teachers give them points while standing quietly in line. I've done that as well. At lunchtime the counselor comes in and gives every student a point. So I'm not for sure what his reasoning for that is. Because when he comes in, they get extra loud and get out of their seats, and it's not following cafeteria rules. (Brittany)

Brittany discusses here that students can be awarded points for standing quietly in line. What is the reward in being a calm body? The hallway expectations as set forth by the school include standing in a straight line with your hands to yourself and remaining quiet. These expectations were decided by the school staff and are commonplace in many schools. There are given situations in life where humans need to be "safe" to these standards- to not run, to be quiet and listen, but oftentimes in schools, these situations are not explained. Students are simply told what to do by the hierarchy of power within the building and if they do not comply, they are punished by either negative reinforcement or in this case, through not being awarded the school capital, PBIS points. There also seem to be times where certain faculty members, in this case, Larry, are giving points following certain school expectations (i.e., attendance) by being at lunch, and therefore earn a point from him. In the same action, the students are excited to see him from Brittany's perspective and then are out of their seats and using a loud voice. By these actions, students are not being "safe," "responsible," or "respectful" and therefore are not earning points in these categories. In Theme 3 of this chapter, I will discuss this further by acknowledging the negative reinforcement still used within the building through the use of Paw Slips and clip moving.

The school even tried at the beginning of the year to establish a "teacher store" where teachers could spend the points they earned for following through with staff-based expectations.

> Well, at the beginning of the year, the principal gave us points, you know, for giving paperwork back to the secretary or something like that. I got 20 points from her this year. And like other staff members can give points too, and then we will have, we didn't set it up there. But we had good intentions that the setup the teachers' section of the store, so

teachers can shop with their points. She was like, you know, if you have a Bath and Bodyworks and you had Christmas guests, you don't like the smell maybe someone else does So bring them to the store and then teachers can purchase them with their points. Okay. But no one did. (Courtney)

Reflexivity Note: I've read before that there are schools where there are teacher incentive programs. Administration would award teachers points for meeting their expectations or going "above and beyond" their duties. Even in my own experiences, there have been attempts at teacher rewards and extrinsic motivators through shout outs on the morning announcements or some candy or a gift card to Starbucks in your mailbox after helping with a school related matter. The tiered interventions are geared towards students, not staff. I know that schools and districts have plans for teachers, and may have plans for teachers to improve, but awarding PBIS points for teachers does not seem like an effective way for teachers to improve their practice. It's the same thing as giving points to the kids with no regards to making connections and discussing the root of any problem happening- without discussion about moving forward and learning, the points really don't have meaning. I think this also could cause animosity amongst the staff if they feel like they have to earn respect of their administration through having points.

Relationships with the School Community

"Change is needed. But it's difficult to have grandparents raising kids, there's a big generational gap there. Sometimes that's hard to leave. But if we start to dialogue with positive communication, how it changes their relationship with me." (Larry)

In the Tremont Community, there is a large population of students living with a non-parental guardian. As Larry stated above, there are many grandparents raising their grandchildren, and the generational gap can lead to a breakdown in communication from school to home and vice versa.

So, I've tried to add in a community engagement piece where kids get 500 points, you send home something and they go, "Oh, look, your student has been doing great. Here's 40 points and a keychain for you, Mom or Dad. Thanks for doing what you do. Because your kid at school is awesome." Instead of the negative communication of you know, Johnny forgot to do his homework again today. I'm sending you this note. It's exactly the opposite. Hey, look, I'm just letting you know that Johnny is great at school. He does as he stands in line. He's prepared for class. He creates relationships with his peers. (Larry)

Larry brings up an important point here. Positive communication between school and home can create relationships between the school community. If the only communication the guardians are receiving about their child is negative, it creates more barriers between home and school because of the negative attitude about the child.

Reflexivity Note: Really, I'm not sure what sending home a keychain for the parents will accomplish, the notion of positive communication is important. What is missing from this conversation, though, is working towards a solution and productive discussion about the best interest of the child. Focusing on "Johnny" not doing his homework is only pulling from the negatives while telling the guardians that "Johnny" is awesome is only focusing on a positive trait of the student. If the concern at hand is that homework is not being completed or that folders and papers are not being signed, then there needs to be work done at the ground level in finding solutions for the problems. Focusing on the negative or harboring toxic positivity will not benefit the students in the long run.

So, I created what I call it an anti-Paw Slip. Which is exactly the opposite of everything they happen to slip. Johnny didn't come to school, when he didn't have his papers. Sally didn't… I wrote the slip to say exactly the opposite. Let's have positive communication for parents. And we'll improve in our relationship and family engagement, so it builds confidence in the students. And we're going to get more dialogue from the parents than we ever have before. (Larry)
Getting dialogue from the parents is a goal for this community. Courtney and Brittany talked about the community involvement as well with the school. They stressed that their open-

house nights and back to school events usually had great turnouts, but that involvement in the day to day was not as successful. Larry spoke on this, mentioning that a dad had no idea he was dressed as an Aquabat during drop-off in the morning.

> Then you go, okay. Is he having a conversation with his son? Because his son knows, has he asked him? (Larry)

Larry seemed bothered that this dad of a student was not aware of who the Aquabats were and why he would be dressed as one. He seemed to assume that the information going home with the students was being discussed and the parents were more involved in the day-to-day functions of the school. These conversations of positivity and "awesomeness" are great and important in the communication process, but to reach out to the school community, it will take more than anti-negativity slips home.

Theme 3: Points, Clips & Slips, Oh My!

PBIS is a Positive Behavioral System. This means that there is only positive reinforcement used in the school to reinforce the behaviors that are expected in the school environment. If a student is following the expectations, they can earn points, but if they are not following expectations, nothing is taken away from them. The idea of taking something away for not following the expectations is a negative reinforcement. One key theme across the interviews of the Tremont Elementary teachers was the use of multiple behavior systems alongside PBIS, including negative reinforcement. There were two negative reinforcement systems used in tandem with awarding points for tangible rewards. The first negative reinforcement strategy mentioned was the use of a clip system. When talking with Brittany and Courtney, they both casually mentioned having their students' clip moved in class. I asked both of the participants for more information on how they use the clip system. They described it to me like a traffic light

system. Everyone in the class has a clip and everyone begins their day on "green". If a student

shows a behavior that is perceived as negative by the teacher, they can have their clip moved to

yellow for the first offense of the day, then red for the second. These negative behaviors are

often behaviors that are the opposite of what a student would do to earn a PBIS point to

eventually spend in the school store. The second type of negative reinforcement used was the

implementation of "Paw Slips". Paw Slips seemed to be used as a reminder when something was

not completed, such as not having your folder signed by a guardian or not completing your

homework. Both of these reinforcers will be discussed below from the participants under the

heading "Demerit Systems".

Earning Points

> "The students liked earning points. They… attendance was one way to get points,
> responsibility I think it was like responsibility… and I have a cheat sheet- there's respect,
> responsibility, safety, kindness, and attendance. Okay… there's the five ways the child
> could earn points for the PBIS store." (Courtney)

To earn PBIS points, the school had established five overarching themes for students to

follow:

Table 12

Tremont Elementary School PBIS Pillars

1. Attendance
2. Responsibility
3. Respect
4. Kindness
5. Safety

The following Table (12) organizes the types of reasons a teacher might award points to a

student. There is a discussion of these experiences to follow.

Table 13

Participants Experiences with the PBIS Pillars

Participant	Quote	Pillar
Courtney	"Usually, I gave it for like kindness like picking up like stuff at the cafeteria like an item on the cafeteria so the custodian didn't have to do it the kids were good at helping the assistant cook clear off the salad bar okay."	Kindness
Brittany	"I use it for if several people who are not following directions, or causing problems, then I give a point to the ones who are behaving and following directions. And they like hearing the sound. So I make sure to turn it up so they can hear the 'ding'."	Respect
Brittany	"Not interrupting me. We have some students, that butt heads a lot. So if they're arguing then they wouldn't get a point if they follow class rules, being polite, following directions. And I have a lot of directions with playing instruments."	Respect
Brittany	"Like for safe and in the hallway would be facing forward safe in the classroom not running pushing chairs and responsibility would be like returning all items after you use them for me responsibility handling the instruments as directed."	Safety
Courtney	"I just assume, you know, picking up something and they're showing maybe respect and kindness."	Kindness/Respect

Reflexivity Note: I always find hearing the expectations or pillars of PBIS very interesting. The key terms that are used for these pillars are such broad concepts that it is so difficult as an outsider to figure out what a student could earn a point for. Things like "kindness" and "respect" mean different things across different cultures, and if we as teachers are putting our own cultural norms onto our students, we are not using equitable practices.

Demerit Systems: Clip Moving and Slips Home

Red is bad, like, you had two moves in a day, and that's not good. So if they get it in the beginning of the nine weeks, there's no reason to be good the rest of the nine week, okay. (Courtney)

Even though PBIS is written into the literature as a Positive Reinforcement System, the teachers at Tremont are experiencing both positive and negative reinforcement. While they are giving points for meeting expectations, they are also juggling using a "clothespin" system and Paw Slips. The participants describe the clothespin system to move each students' clothespin to different colors: green, yellow, and red. All students begin their day on green and can be moved to yellow and red with "misbehaviors" defined by the teachers.

Table 14

Participants' Experiences with Misbehavior Practices

Participant	Quote	Pillar of PBIS
Brittany	"When I started at Tremont, there were reasons. So they got their clip moved their reasons like being disrespectful, keep your hands and feet to yourself. There's like, six or eight reasons, and you had to document the date, name, reason on it, and what teacher gave it. And they don't have the reasons on that now. So I think it's less clear why they get their clip moved, as well."	Respect, Safety
Courtney	"So if you get five or less clothes pins, and Paw Slips combined- Paw Slips are like demerits, like they forgot their homework or their folder and so then you get a Paw slip. Mostly Paw Slip are like for parents because especially when like, they're little like Kindergarten and First, because the parents have to sign their folders and make sure they have everything for day. But if they're like, second, third and fourth, they're a little more responsible. And it's more, it's little bit more on them than the parents"	Responsibility
Courtney	"Um, sometimes, you know, sometimes they just like, you know, they don't do their homework. And I will give him Paw Slips too,"	Responsibility

Reflexivity Note: When talking with Courtney, she stated that the Paw Slips are more for the parents, especially in the younger grades, because they have to get the folder from their child to sign it nightly. These Paw Slips going home are then going to the guardian as a reminder that the take-home folder was not signed. If the parent is not seeing a folder, what are the odds that they are seeing a Paw Slip to remind them about signing the folder? I thought about this for a long time. I took a walk after this interview and kept thinking about how many students are missing out on opportunities or are receiving a punishment because of something their guardian did not follow through on. There used to be a reality television show I watched with my mom titled *Dance Moms* about a dance studio in Pittsburgh, PA run by an irrational dance teacher who would punish the dancers by taking them out of performances because she was angry with their mothers. How is it justifiable to give a student a demerit because their parents did not sign their folder, especially in a community where there is knowingly a high population of students being raised by grandparents, in foster care, or are transient between home settings?

Expectations

> When the Aquabats are like, 'Okay if you were an Aquabat, what would you do? What do you think MC Bat Commander would do if you've run into this situation?' And so again, you put it back on the kid. (Larry)

The expectations of the school vary from participant to participant. Each participant has their own classroom structure and their own experiences that allow them to shape their classroom in their own way. Courtney brings up "kindness" many times in her interviews with me and discusses kindness as helping in the cafeteria or picking up trash around the school. Courtney also talks about responsibility by having homework completed on time and having a calm body.

Or if I just see them being nice or a hallway, I'll give them points. Or if they're quiet in the hallway, and not like jumping up and down and twirling around showing like responsibility. So I'd give them a point. (Courtney)

Brittany, on the other hand, feels as if to earn a point, it should be something that isn't necessarily expected of the students, but something that goes above and beyond the normal standard.

I always tell a couple fourth grade boys to or girls to help to do it [set up chairs for concerts]. And they do get a point. They have points for that. But I would think it would be volunteering instead of being directed, would be why they would get the point. (Brittany)

Brittany also discussed this through her experience of students earning PBIS at lunch for simply being at lunch.

And they're sitting there eating lunch, they're not doing anything out of the ordinary that I would consider worthy of a point. Like, I honestly, have no idea why. It's not something I would do. Because it just seems like giving points for no reason, like rewarding them for I don't know, any better way to say just rewarded them for being there. (Brittany)

Though Brittany felt that there are some things that should just be done without the option of earning a point because it is the right thing to do, Larry stressed that these points are similar to payment for any other job.

So teachers think oh, God, you know, old school teachers are why should I give you points for something you shouldn't be doing anyway? Okay, why do I pay you because you should be coming to work and doing this? Because this is what you choose to do. Right? This is your calling? Why should I pay you? Same thing, same thing. (Larry)

When talking about her mom donating money so they students can take field trips outside of the building to a movie or a restaurant, Courtney discussed that the rewards themselves can act as a vehicle to teach students expectations for success

So like, they used to do stuff, which is good, like outside of the school setting. And I feel like it like helps them become, you know, like better systems. Like if they go out to like a restaurant, maybe they'll know how to act, you know, like we take them to pizza after the movie. (Courtney)

Reflexivity Note: Urban and Wagoner (2008) talk about the expectations set forth in schools and how systems of power have led the decision making processes for what is taught in schools and what is not. The discussion of teaching students appropriate restaurant practices seems on a surface level harmless, that teacher students to be polite and serve themselves a slice of pizza would be a harmless practice. However, there are so many cultural elements around the act of eating that by rewarding points to students for eating, sitting, and serving themselves the "right" way becomes extremely problematic.

Theme 4: Searching for Purpose

"They get inculcated into the system" (Larry)

The system. The school has served as a system of generating students to become productive members of society. With situations like the "Lads" in *Learning to Labour* (Willis 1977), the school is a place where students are sorted into groups based on what the school thinks they will be able to accomplish. These ideas fit into the narrative of grit in the school, and grit being a critical element in awarding and earning PBIS points.

Though I asked all of the teachers about what their thoughts and experiences were involving grit in the classroom and grit as an element of PBIS, not much discussion opened up about this with the teachers at Tremont. When I asked Courtney how, or if, she saw grit being modeled in the Aquabats program she replied with simply saying the program just wanted the kids to be "good".

> I don't think so… it was just like more of, you know, like, the five components of the PBIS you know, trying to just be good. (Courtney)

Larry had a different take on grit.

> Kids are tough. But in the same breath, they have to be taught that that's okay, if you know what I mean. And whatever they are, they're okay. (Larry)

When Larry was discussing grit, he discussed it as more of a feeling, like feeling angry, you can also feel grit. Even though it is okay to feel angry, or in this case gritty, Larry talks about himself being a solution-oriented counselor who works with the "symptom". Larry shared that his goal is to focus on changing the way we think.

Specifically, Larry talked with me about one student he found to have "grit" in the sense of Goodman (2018). Larry shared with me that one the day of one of our interviews, it was also the day of the end of the year school field trip to a local state park. Students who made the reward by having less than two clothespins moved to the "red" zone by the end of the grading term were able to attend. There were only a handful of students who did not get to attend the trip, one student in particular was a young girl who Larry was acquainted with from talking with during lunch and his time with students. The morning of the trip, the student knew she was not going to be able to attend, so Larry came up with a different role for her.

> We put her to work in the office. I've never seen that kid smile until that day. But there's no need, she's already been punished. She's not on the trip. So me and the receptionist decided, hey, let's give her a job. And like, Hey, can you do this for me? redo that for me? rundown. So we made her of service gave her a role where she felt important and valued as a human being not judged. (Larry)

Larry continued to talk about this particular student throughout his interviews while we were talking about grit and resilience. Like Goodman (2018) Larry not only attempted to create a sense of worth for this student, but also talked about grit being understood differently across different settings.

> See, she's tough, she's fine. Because she'll be alright. She's very resilient. She takes care of a little sister, she understands that she can make it through it. So that's not a problem.

So she understands the grit and what she has to do. She has that already. But she doesn't have that connection, if you know what I mean. My fear for her is against the disconnectedness with the school environment. (Larry)

Larry goes on to explain more of how she shows grit with her sister, and that her family has experienced a lot of loss and change over the last few years.

…blended family. Dad had a disabled brother who just died within the last six months he's been caring for for 10 years. Their mom is out of the picture. He's living with the lady who has another daughter, a lot of entanglements, not letting her go and not letting her feel part connected to the class is a failure…She's very resilient. She takes care of a little sister, she understands that she can make it through it. So that's not a problem. So she understands the grit and what she has to do. She has that already. But she doesn't have that connection, if you know what I mean. (Larry)

Reflexivity Note: The "connection" that Larry speaks of is about this student's connection with the school as a system. She isn't a "bad kid" or lazy, or other tropes that often get tossed as labels for students who consistently do not meet the expectations of the school, but through her family experiences, this student has been able to show resilience for her sister and her dad.

This particular student is not the only student who may show their strengths in ways that are not typically associated with school programming or traditional school success. In the following section of this chapter, I share my discussions with the teachers and their experiences in the student's engagement with PBIS at Tremont.

Teachers' Feelings Towards Student Engagement in PBIS

I don't think they really understand what it's supposed to be. They just know if they have enough points that they'll get a reward. (Brittany)

Brittany shared during her interview that she's not sure if the students quite understand the purpose of PBIS. Through our discussions on consistency in using the program in the school,

it was also discussed that many of the teachers are not understanding the purpose of PBIS either.

One idea that Brittany and Courtney both discussed was the lack of change in students who were

not earning many points. They experienced that students who were earning points were

consistently earning them, and the students who often were not earning points for following

expectations continued to not follow expectations- the points were not an incentive for them.

> They enjoy getting the points but it doesn't seem like it really makes a difference for the ones who don't get points like they will behave better after that after I give up give points to other students but it's really not a major change. (Brittany)

While discussing this, Brittany seemed to think of a particular student in class who does not always earn points.

> There is a boy in foster care who misbehaves, talks out, often argues with other students, and then…I'm just realizing, thinking about it. Where I've given points to the students who are following directions, then he doesn't get that reinforced, doesn't get reinforcement. Like he's being left out. I may have to rethink how I do… he's in the foster care system. And a lot of times he's not earning his points and you feel like he needs maybe he needs those. So I think I'm rewarding the students who are doing what they're supposed to, but not really paying as much attention to like if this student behave, they're really well one day instead of or even just didn't argue with someone that day. (Brittany)

There was a long pause of reflection

> So I think I'm rewarding the students who are doing what they're supposed to, but not really paying as much attention to like if this student behave, they're really well one day instead of or even just didn't argue with someone that day. (Brittany)

> Throughout the interviews with the three elementary school teachers, I asked them to

recall a time when PBIS was both effective and ineffective for their students. I asked them to

recall a time when they experienced success with PBIS and a time when they felt PBIS was not

doing a student justice.

> Well, I gave points to students that completed their homework. I had a bad day. I'd seen kids not doing their homework. I have, like, 20 kids I see. And I think 15 did not do their homework. The five students that did their homework, I gave them 10 PBIS points. And they were all excited about it. Then the next day, I had more students do their homework, and I knew their PBIS points. So then I started giving them points for completing their

homework, and all the students, all students are doing their homework. So the point seemed to help the students want to do their homework. (Courtney)

I asked for clarification here, did all students continue doing their homework? Were all 20 students successful in earning their points?

> Um, sometimes, you know, sometimes they just like, you know, they don't do their homework. And I will give him Paw Slips too, because I was like, I expect to do your homework, just like your regular classroom teacher. And the teachers were okay with it. They actually wanted me to do it because, you know, they give them Paw Slips if they don't do their homework. (Courtney)

Courtney felt as if this was a successful implementation of PBIS, she saw an increase in the amount of students completing homework. Courtney also discusses here using Paw Slips in conjunction with PBIS in a time that made it effective in her perspective.

When I asked Larry about a time this program was unsuccessful in his experiences, he went on to explain not a specific time, but more of what may lead a PBIS program to an unsuccessful space.

> You know, I'd like to tell you this program is, you know, the Dream Program. But you know, it depends on who you're dealing with. And in the moment and what you're talking about, you know, because when you get the older kids, they were like, it became semantics like, oh, well, I didn't hit him. I shoved him. I didn't throw that ball. I tossed it. And so you're doing the pillars in the PBIS are like, well, I don't do that we do this? What do you mean stand in the line? Your line can be more than one direction, you can have more than one. What's the reason that we do that? You know, and so there's times you find yourself fighting, to try to get an idea across that you think is simple, that kids just don't want to do for some reason. They don't see any value in it. (Larry)

Long Term Goals for Students' Success

> But the school doesn't reward kids for being themselves, the school goes, you're going to do what we tell you to do. See, I don't do that. I think that you're okay, just as you are, I need you to be at school under these pillars because I need you to be safe. I need to be respectful so that we can all learn. And that's being part of responsible. And if you're going to be responsible, whatever you do try to be kind to do that you have to come to school. So now I just told you our five pillars in like three sentences. (Larry)

Given the PBIS model experienced by the participants at Tremont Elementary School, it would appear that Larry's sentiment that students are not rewarded for being themselves is true. Students are rewarded for following the expectations placed on them which, oftentimes, are for their guardians as well which the child cannot help. Larry's discussion on safety, respect and responsibility still leaves many open avenues for discussion on how student behavior should be handled within the school environment.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the interviews with the teachers at Fairfield Middle School, the feeder middle school for Tremont Elementary students. Though the experiences of the participants all vary, there is overlap in the purpose of PBIS. The program has different expectations and rewards in place, but it is still being used to place expectations on students. There are also similar concerns with the over fidelity of the program being implemented into their school.

Chapter 5: Findings on Educators' Experiences at Fairfield Middle School

Context

Fairfield Middle School, a Title 1 school located in rural West Virginia, services 662 students in grades 5-8 (WV Balanced Scorecard, 2021). It is the only middle school in the county, and its students matriculate to the only high school in the county. Because of the size of the school and the unity it brings to the community as the three elementary schools feed into Fairfield, it is important to recognize the teachers' positions in the community.

> So, I started here, it would have been the fall of 2018. And really, it was my first full time teaching job. I subbed technically in a long-term position from us an entire year before that in [city redacted]. Actually, I was living in [city redacted] at the time, and then that position ended at the end of the year. And then I landed my first full time job here and in Fairfield County. (Julia)

After learning about Julia coming to be a teacher in the Fairfield community, I tried to understand more about her experiences in the community.

> It's very close knit. It's similar. I actually grew up in [redacted, another small area of WV], so I feel like there's such a parallel and I think that's what kind of innocence, like kept me here, because I just felt like that closeness with home. But definitely that small town, close-knit community aspect you feel when you're here that you get. (Julia)

Julia, an English teacher at Fairfield, discussed how her own upbringing in a different small town in a different region of West Virginia played into her perception of the Fairfield Community. The "innocence" she feels in parallel between Fairfield and her own hometown comes up in her narrative of teaching in the area.

Sophia, on the other hand, did not grow up in a rural region or even West Virginia, but stayed in the area after college looking for employment and the opportunity for a Master's degree.

> I had my student teaching experience for most of the semesters at [redacted] High School in Fairfield County. My other semester was at [redacted] Middle School, in [redacted]

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County, after I graduated, which was kind of when the stock market crashed and the recession hit in 2009. I had planned and hoped to go back to Pittsburgh to teach. But there were very few and far between social studies jobs available in Pittsburgh at the time. And so, I decided to go back to school and get a second master's degree in special education. And while I was doing that, I began subbing and subbed in Fairfield County, just because that's where I was familiar with being new there. And I spent a year subbing just randomly, like, wherever they needed me. And then the next year, there was an open position at Fairfield Middle School. (Sophia)

Sophia seemed to find her way into this school district much like Courtney and Brittany at Tremont Elementary did—by looking for open job positions out of college and then gaining some experience in the community by student teaching or substitute teaching. There was a major difference between the two teachers' interactions in the community. While Courtney discussed her activities in the community, Sophia was not as connected outside of the school day, due to another job she had after school.

Whenever I taught in Fairfield County, I did not experience my students in their community a lot because I lived in [city redacted]. So. I was commuting, so I was really only there for the school day. I would have to go leave work and go to my other job. So, I wouldn't try to go to every one [sporting event], I would say I tried to go monthly. (Sophia)

Lastly, there was Crystal. Crystal told me that she was born and raised in the Fairfield community and always knew she wanted to be a teacher.

So, I always wanted to be a teacher, I tell my kids, because now I teach career education, I tell them that I was that weird kindergarten kid who went to school and came home after about two weeks and told my parents, I wanted to be a teacher. (Crystal)

Crystal talked with me about how important this community is to her and why she wanted to continue to teach in Fairfield even after moving to an outside city with her family. She talked a lot about giving back to the community through being a teacher.

And I want it to be the community that I grew up in. And I want kids to see that there's more than what they have. And that education can be a way to get out. And not necessarily have to be a drug dealer or be stuck in the situation that they're in. And I want to, I want, I just want them to see that there's more than what they have. (Crystal)

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Theme 1: PBIS and The School Structure

"It was kind of like, okay, this is something we have to do. Let's figure out how we're going to do it." (Sophia)

Throughout the interviews with the middle school teachers, there was a consistent conversation about the structure, or lack thereof, in the school during the time of the PBIS implementation and the time period of being a West Virginia PBIS recognized cohort school. The teachers also discussed the school climate and behavior management strategies since the initial cohort year and how the shift in administration has affected their experiences. These interviews were intended to discuss how PBIS was used when it was first implemented in the school; however, the current experiences of teaching without PBIS or any set behavioral plan were extremely valuable in the stories of each teacher. Many of the responses discussed in this chapter weave the experiences of the then and the now and how PBIS has shaped their experiences of staff and student relationships, leadership within the building, and student trauma.

Shifting In and Out of PBIS

As previously mentioned, Fairfield Middle School was a PBIS school before COVID, and they do have plans to restart the program soon. Over the past three years in addition to the many changes and disturbances caused by the pandemic, there has also been a complete turnover of all three administrators in the building. This has caused a shift in consistency, expectations, and implementation of PBIS. When Fairfield was officially using PBIS in 2017 as a Cohort School, the teachers, as stated above by Julia, were more or less thrown blindly into the program.

> We literally built the plane while we were in the air. It was just, "This is what we're going to do." And we just all went, "We're going to do what?" And I think had we started planning and used one year to plan it, and then started using it, I think we would have had more staff buy in, instead of just saying, "This is what we're doing. Let's try it and see what happens." Which is kind of what we did, and I think that's where we lost some of our staff members on it. (Crystal)

Reflexivity Note: I have heard the phrase "building the plane while we fly it" one too many

times in reference to public education. It was constantly used during the early days of the

pandemic and has really stuck through the teachers' shortage. Why is it in the field of

education that there is a constant cycle of teachers carrying on their daily responsibilities while

also being expected to fix the problems, or "build the plane while we fly it". I recognize that

adapting and working as the job changes is important, but it does feel like educators are

expected to fix many problems that are outside the realm of our control.

Similarly, when the students came back to school in the fall of 2021, there was no plan

and teachers were left to their own devices to recognize and reward the behaviors that they

deemed necessary.

> So, it was this year, more of kind of just like every teacher may have had to set up their
> own expectations. And right, like, if you wanted to give Dojo [Class Dojo] points or
> whatever you could have, but if you wanted to do a demerit system… (Julia)

Reflexivity Note: It is very hard coming into a school year without a plan. I know I felt this in

the 2021 school year when the "COVID Schedules" were no longer being used and all students

were in school every day. So much of the point-giving and point-rewarding had gone to the

wayside to focus on student social-emotional wellbeing and making sure we as teachers were

doing our best to teach the curriculum. I really wonder why we are trying to go back to PBIS

instead of really investigating the social and emotional needs of our students? I feel like we are

taking a step backwards in reestablishing PBIS instead of continuing the build on the SEL.

Having every teacher come up with a class plan would be stressful--especially if there are still

expectations of tangible positive reinforcement being used school-wide.

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Expectations in Awarding Points

The points at Fairfield Middle were called "Nobles". Noble is an acronym which encompasses all of the school expectations which Julia discusses below. This occurs in many schools, the PBIS expectations are given a name that has some connection to the school environment, in this case, the school mascot. One major concept that all three participants consistently mentioned was the idea of expectations. There are expectations to award points to students consistently, and there are expectations that the students will display certain behaviors. One flaw with this process, however, is that each individual has their own experiences with their own consistency and what they expect of others.

> I will be honest, I was not always the best with being consistent with using it [the point system]. I struggled with working that into my daily routine for whatever reason. And so, I think if I had been more consistent with it, that I would have felt that it was more successful in its implementation, but because I wasn't as consistent with it. Um, to me, it wasn't the best, but I think some of that was my fault. (Sophia)

Reflexivity Note: I really resonated with Sophia on this. I felt very inconsistent with giving PBIS points in my former position. I think it was in part to my personal views on the program, but also in part to the time commitment it took to accurately award points and try to have a perspective on what each of my individual students were going through. At my former teaching job, we were expected to award points for responsibility, respect, and readiness. We were able to award on any or all of these each day but were expected to at least be offering a point a day to all of your students. Many of my colleagues were also overwhelmed by the time commitment and would do an all or nothing type of situation where students were either earning all 3 points or 0 points. So, even if students were ready for class and respectful in class, if they were not responsible, perhaps by talking out of turn, running, or forgetting

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homework, they would lose all 3 points. This was not because they did not show respect and

readiness as established by that classroom, but because it was too time consuming to give 3

different points to all students! It felt ridiculous and there were many days I just didn't give

points. There were many days where I figured if everyone else was just giving 3 points, it

would balance out. Essentially, this hit home with me. I do take fault for not awarding daily

points, but my reasoning may differ from Sophia's.

So how are teachers expected to reward points? Has there been a discussion with the staff

about how to award points and a certain percentage of points that should be given daily? Much

of this conversation comes down to in-house training, which as discussed above was

significantly interrupted by the overturn in administration and the COVID-19 Pandemic. Even

before the pandemic, it seems there was not a clear line of communication.

> I think, I think it was, there was a lack of consistency across the building with teachers. using it and there was not consistent follow up from our administrators with teachers who were not like myself who were not consistently utilizing the program. I know the administrators could see which teachers were giving points and like, who was, you know, who was giving it when. So they could easily see who was not doing what they're supposed to be and follow up with it. And that wasn't happening. And I think that's why people kind of slacked off with it. (Sophia)

Sophia, who admitted earlier that she did not follow the program with much fidelity also

discusses that the "fidelity" in the building was sparse because of the lack of communication and

training for all educators in the building.

> Now we didn't have specifics with like, what the criteria for how many we were expected to give out, and for what exact behavior so it was really left up to the teacher's discretion….I believe that administrators can check how many that we've given out. So I think on there, and if that was a little bit more consistent, and then addressing that with individuals that they have not given that. (Julia)

Julia agrees, there were no guidelines for the criteria that the teachers had to give points

for, which could make the implementation a bit messy for those involved. I found it interesting

that Julia and Sophia both discussed that administrators had access to a database displaying the

number of points each teacher gave out each day, as if the teachers did have expectations to

follow, much like the students. In the PBIS software, teachers can see how many points students

are earning in each class and use it as data for student success. Crystal discusses below how

PBIS points can be used for data when looking into student success for attendance.

> I think it could be identifying because we used it for attendance, okay. So you could very easily identify those students who were not there as often. So it was like, oh, wait a minute. They're not getting their attendance Noble every week. Oh, wait, they've been absent four days this week. They were absent for four days last week, they were absent… This is a trend, why is this a trend? (Crystal)

Reflexivity Statement - I keep thinking about how many expectations are set for students by the teachers, but also how many expectations are set forth onto teachers by the higher powers to them, such as district and state offices as well as mandates coming down from the state and federal government. The classroom is such a unique place to work. The rules and regulations are all coming from individuals who may not have been in a classroom since they were a student themselves. We want more and more teachers to work in these positions of power to make changes in education, but with every turn these positions continue to be filled by non-educators.

Staff Relationships

Another element of the use and implementation of PBIS at Fairfield Middle was the

constant turnover of staff members including both classroom teachers and administration. Not

only has this been difficult for the staff to grow and communicate effectively, but the students

have not been able to make lasting relationships with teachers who are leaving year after year.

> What to say in three years, we've probably had 50 or more staff members change…. about 15 every year. (Crystal)

Having 15 teachers leave the school every year is an incredibly high number, especially

in a small school. Constantly having new employees would be tough in regard to training them

on the PBIS protocol and building relationships between staff and students, and camaraderie

among the staff themselves. In addition to the roughly 50 educators leaving the district, there has

also been a complete turn over in administrative roles over the past year.

> It's been difficult on them. I mean, you can tell just because behaviors have been a little
> crazy, because we get a lot of new teachers, or we get teachers who are working on
> permits, so they're not really certified for the subject they're teaching. So our students
> take advantage of that. (Crystal)

> Even with administration there has been a turnover in the past 3 years which has caused a

disruption in the rollout and fidelity of PBIS.

> Yeah, we had two new ones [administrators] this year. [Wow.] So…so we have three
> total actually, we have the biggest school I believe in the county. (Julia)

> The changes and lack of communication to new members of the staff has left gaps in

what needs to be done and who is responsible for certain elements of the behavior program and

everything that goes with it.

> Moreso with teachers and other admin or counselors, not really knowing who is expected,
> expected to send out the messages or has been changed from year to year, so there's not
> really consistency with that practice. (Julia)

Reflexivity Statement - Not knowing who to turn to with a question is frustrating, and with

my experiences in using PBIS and being on the committee, there are many frustrations because

the expectations set forth in the "rules" for the school are up for interpretation in so many

ways.

Staff Expectations and Trainings

Similar to the experience of Tremont Elementary, the staff at Fairfield discussed with me that there were trainings for PBIS, but there were inconsistencies in who went to the trainings and how the information was disseminated to the staff. Crystal, who has been employed at Fairfield the longest, had mentioned multiple trainings, but communicated her frustration that the meetings feel unsuccessful when the entire staff is not involved at the same time.

> We've had quite a few trainings. But they all just kind of run together. And we've only had a couple that have really been successful. The ones for [University Program] seem to be successful, okay. They're just never full staff. They're always done by teams. So fifth grade meets with them, sixth grade meets with them, seventh grade meets with them, eighth grade meets with them. Creative Arts might get to meet with them, because we don't have team planning. (Crystal)

Reflexivity Statement: These experiences are similar to my own. When I was working at a school that used PBIS, I was on the PBIS committee, but not in its initial year. The team who was a part of the program during the initial year of training attended two official PBIS trainings with a team of three teachers, a guidance counselor, and an administrator. In the following year, a few teachers followed different careers and their seats on the PBIS committee needed to be filled. When I began working with the committee, we did not attend any official trainings, but we did meet together every once in a while to plan for school-wide rewards days like our Fall Festival and the end of the year Field Day events. Not having a set training as a team or even as a school did feel frustrating because the information was being passed down, and like Crystal said, not everyone in the building is a member of a team, nor is each team sharing the information in the same way. Even if we were, there are still teachers who are going to interpret the information differently because of our own experiences and wants for our classrooms. But…. are our wants in our classrooms really what the students need?

We do [have a PBIS team]. I can't tell you who's on it. Because it's been so long since we've met. (Crystal)

Reflexivity Statement: This is partly COVID but also partly the insane amount of staff turnover at this school. I can't imagine trying to keep a team of educators together on a consistent meeting schedule when the teachers are being rehired so often!

Because Fairfield Middle had been identified as a cohort school for using PBIS, I wondered how much training was coming from the state level.

I think we've only met with them [the training program coordinators] maybe three times total. (Crystal)

Reflexivity Statement: So, not only is the PBIS committee so inconsistent that the members are not even sure who is on it, the training facilitators from the state university who identify cohort schools are only training schools three times a year? At that, the whole school is not being trained, but a select committee of people…who may not know they are on said committee. It sounds so stressful, and it is stressful to have been a part of a program that ebbs and flows with inconsistencies that are out of my scope of control.

Even besides the communication practices about the PBIS program itself, it seems there is a lack of communication in the building around other key areas as well. When teachers are sending students to the counselor for assistance, there was not always transparency in what was happening with the student and what the best practices would be moving forward.

I know there's been, I've heard some talk in school about just wanting to know more about that. It's been more of like, like, we would just receive an email knowing that a kid was handled with care, but not much more about that. And it seems like there's been some fallout with some of the staff that need to receive some of those messages or not? So there's kind of like a disconnect, I guess with it. (Julia)

The relationship between staff members also seems to hold a part of how the PBIS

program and other behavioral interventions have been implemented.

> When I was in Fairfield County, it literally felt like the school psychologist's only job
> was testing. So, the only interactions I ever had with a school psychologist was during
> IEP meetings, for eligibility. Um, but like, we had a family- like a family coordinator
> type person, outreach, but I felt like during my time there, their job was more like trying
> to get parents into volunteer and help out with big events, not necessarily doing more,
> like more student centered, like Student Wellbeing type stuff. (Sophia)

Because of the inconsistencies, it even left some rough relationships between the faculty

members. The experiences here were greatly different from each other. It is also important to

remember that the staff has changed multiple times over the years since the original

implementation of PBIS. Julia spoke on her current experiences with the staff relationships in the

building regarding asking for help with a student. *"Admin? Yes, counselors, just kind of 50/50."*

(Julia)

Currently, Julia's experience with the new administration of the school was positive. She

felt like she could talk with them over concerns with students. However, her experiences with the

counselors in the school are, as she states "50/50". The relationship of the teachers and the

school counselors make up a critical role in the success of students, especially those who are

experienced or have experienced trauma.

Sophia, who was speaking of her previous time at Fairfield, felt more positive about the

counselors.

> I think most of the teachers at Fairfield Middle School during my time there felt like
> comfortable going to the counselors about any problems with the students and that would
> be a good working relationship. (Sophia)

Because the work of PBIS is to work with the students, I asked a follow up question

regarding the perceptions of student and counselor relationships.

[Did the guidance counselor have a good relationship with the students?]

Um, yes. And no, I know, one of the guidance counselors, a lot of the kids didn't feel that she was as approachable. The other guidance counselor, I think some of the kids were comfortable talking with him. But other times, they were just kind of like, yeah, he's a little, like, out there different. So in, so I don't know how, like, I think they built relationships and made connections with some students. But I don't think it was to the point where it was like, 80% of the student population or anything like that? (Sophia)

Reflexivity Statement: The relationships between counselors and teachers has not been highlighted well throughout the interviews with the teachers here at Fairfield or with the interviews at Tremont. The expertise in both fields is so valuable to the mental and physical wellbeing of our students that there has to be a way to better communicate and facilitate the relationship of both parties within the school.

Theme 2: Capitalizing Expectations: Earning "Points" through NOBLE Behavior

Much like the faculty at Tremont, the teachers at Fairfield discussed with me the expectations set forth to earn points to spend on school-based rewards. In the previous section, I discussed the expectations of the staff to follow the PBIS protocols and award points. Like many schools, Fairfield utilized a play on words in relation to their school mascot to name their points system and school expectations in an acronym. In the following section, I will discuss the expectations placed on students to earn their NOBLE points.

So we were expected to give out NOBLEs, since we are like our mascot is the knight for the school. And it's really for like, any behavior that we deem as like… responsible kind, just to really like, help to hold them accountable, but to also reinforce what we expect to see within them. (Julia)

We would start off, we tried to starting off each year, with kind of going through, they called it the NOBLE Program, or like Noble Knights, and each letter stood for something and the PBIS team came together and kind of decided what each letter would stand for within the program, that would help lead to positive behavior. For the students. If they were doing each of those things, then they should be succeeding in school. I will be honest, I can't remember what every letter stood for. (Sophia)

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Reflexivity Statement: After talking with Julia and reading back some of our conversation, I spent a lot of time thinking about her description of giving points for any behavior that "we" deem responsible. Who is "we" in a school and how do "we" stay consistent across schools and settings for student equity? If the expectations are being established by a teacher carrying their own biases and experiences of their own lifeword, are these expectations equitable for all of our students? This echoes the Eugenics argument brought forth in Chapter 2, discussing the systemic success created from people in positions of power creating the norm for the upcoming generation. Even with the created flexibility in the system, it is still flexible for the people creating the expectations…there is not much flexibility for those earning the points. It is a yes or a no and can vary by teacher. Unfortunately, it can probably vary by student as well based on the teacher's perception of the student. The biases that we carry matter and need addressed to assure our own assumptions (and misassumptions) are not hurting our students.

And teachers had some flexibility with how they utilized the points, giving the points. I think we've mentioned, like one, one of the expectations had to do with like, being prepared for every class. So each teacher could give points when they wanted to, for students for being prepared in class with what they were looking for. (Sophia)

I asked Sophia for more detail, what exactly is being prepared?

Having your assignment book, having your textbook if it was needed, um, having a writing utensil or if you didn't have one, getting one before class started because I hate fighting the pencil battle. It's not worth the time. So, I just always keep like, pencils and erasers out for the kids to help themselves. So, they always know like, that's one of the first things we go over is where the pencils are, and they know they can help themselves to it. So, for my class, it's never an excuse not to have a writing utensil, because it's the same with paper and stuff. (Sophia)

Reflexivity Statement: I feel like this is an impossible situation. I know when I was responsible for awarding PBIS points, I did it in a much different way than the teacher next

door to me. Do teachers have to be awarding students points in the same exact way? This idea

has always bothered me. If we are trying to prepare them for the "real world", whatever that

means, shouldn't we be sharing with them that there are different "rules and expectations" in

different settings?

Sophia continued to talk about Noble points in her class and what her values and

expectations were for her students.

> Okay, if everyone gets this assignment done, we'll give you all, you know, five nobles,
> or, you know, everyone…one big thing was assignment books, like assignment books
> was a struggle, major struggle. And I know that class like, I would, that was the class I
> was more consistent with, because I was really trying to build that behavior, like positive
> behavior with them. And they could just care less like they couldn't care less about
> getting points for having their assignment book or for completing their warm up. Just
> because they didn't care…It was my students who really, school was not their number
> one priority. They had more going on, you know, home, or it just wasn't their thing.
> Those were the students who were more consistently not prepared. (Sophia)

Reflexivity Statement: I could feel Sophia's frustration when she was talking about her class

expectations. She talked about doing so much so the students could be successful in her

classroom, even if they did not have the supplies on their own. When she was talking about

building positive behavior and the students who "couldn't care less" about the points…I could

just feel her frustration and defeat. The expectation for her as a teacher was to award points,

and she felt like she was doing everything she could to provide an environment for students to

earn those points, but it still was not effective for so many students. I wonder, what service are

we doing to students by not giving them things when they don't perform how we want them

to? Could there be more of an effort on the idea of talking with the students about what they

need? In my experiences in a middle school teaching position, the older students [8th grade]

also did not care as much about points and rewards as the younger grades. Why is this? I think that the older students are not only outgrowing the types of prizes that are available at the school, but they are also seeing the lack of value behind the make-believe points.

Sometimes, though, students may earn enough points to attend a reward or buy something at the store with their points not because of their adherence to the expectations, but because of teachers inflating the points of their students. This was similar to the experiences of the Tremont teachers who felt that prizes and points were just being given out without any meaning behind it.

> Or we would have that random teacher who at the beginning of the year would give 50 Nobles if someone brought in a box of tissues. That's not how the program works, right. So we didn't quite have enough staff buy in for it to work properly. And then we had central office personnel telling us that we couldn't use any type of discipline while using PBIS. Okay, so it was like, but we have to have some type of repercussions for poor behavior. No, we don't want to take Nobles away. We know that we can't do that. But we still have to have some type of repercussions for discipline. So, they are at the very end of last year they had brought they brought two people up from [University] to speak to us and they did explain the discipline part of it. And we were digging into that and then that's when administration changed it. (Crystal)

Crystal talked with me about how much the usage of PBIS had changed at Fairfield over the years. With only some teachers following the plain and others more concerned with disciplinary strategies, there was intervention needed from the county office and from the training program with WVPBIS. Just when things started to settle again, the administration made changes which were largely in part due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. Sophia had her own feelings about teachers giving out random points like Crystal mentioned above.

> Honestly, it pissed me off a lot. And it was really frustrating because I felt like… like, to me that's totally undermining the program. And completely undermining the goal and usage of the program. (Sophia)

Reflexivity Statement: When Crystal was talking about the repercussions for poor behavior, I thought a few things. First, isn't the lack of points earned supposedly the repercussion? Because the students did not earn points, they will not be able to "purchase" any reward type materials in the school, unless of course their points are inflated as mentioned above.

Crystal also shared her expectations for earning NOBLE points, but they were different from the expectations of Sophia and Julia. Crystal even had her own rewards system set up within her classroom.

> And then in my classroom, they got Nobles for completing all of their typing tests during the week. And then for cleaning up their area. So if they've had some type of where they were supposed to, they put their chairs in and their area was clean at the end of class, they got notables for that. So then, with their nobles, they were able to save them for their big field trips. Or they could use them on Fridays in my class to listen to music. So that worked for a lot of my kids, they wanted to listen to music while they work…. "And our school store just had like little trinkets not a real big deal." (Crystal)

Reflexivity Statement: With my experience in using PBIS, this is an element that comes with the program. You can set up a "teacher store" alongside the school store and sell things for only your classroom. I understand where Crystal is coming from- she found something that worked for her needs and expectations as a teacher and ran with it. I did the same thing. And similarly to Crystal's experience, it led to division amongst my co-workers because of their opinion of my "prizes". Where Crystal's co-workers felt angry that the students wanted to listen to music in their room, I felt push back when I offered homework passes and lunch in the classroom. It really falls back on the expectations and consistency in the school. If we are trying to be consistent-- is it fair for teachers to not only establish their own rules, but also their own rewards?

Unlike Tremont, Fairfield did utilize the students points for end of term field trips, but because, as Crystal said, the school store did not have much or did not appeal to students, especially the older students. Julia explained that the older students were more inclined to use five points a week to go outside to socialize on Friday afternoons.

> It actually helped them out a lot. It's almost like they needed that outlet to just let out all of that energy. You could tell the difference with the ones that didn't get outside and they didn't finish their work. Want to be out there and just kind of like a little bit antsy. And energy built up. (Julia)

Another major theme that came up when talking about expected behavior and issues arising with students not following the given expectations was hallway behavior.

It depended on the day of the week and who was there, but sometimes it was taming the Wild Wild West. Some days, it was easier than others, the hallways were always crowded. So, trying to keep them moving and not loitering around. was usually what it was like. (Sophia)

The participants were talking about the expectations in the hallway, that the behavior being seen consistently was not what was expected according to the PBIS program. Since there were established "hallway rules," I wondered what was happening to make the hallways appear to be like the "Wild Wild West."

[If PBIS is not solving the problem, that it's not consistent, what else can be done?]
> In regard to safety, I think a lot of it, at least at the middle school level is just having like a presence in the hallways too. And then just the kids knowing that they're going to be watched, I've kind of noticed that leads upstairs a decline in the presence of those doing, like their hallway duty. (Julia)

Of course, there are students that PBIS points are not effective for.

Crystal and Sophia shared these experiences about students not responding to tangible rewards. They believed that some students truly don't care about being rewarded during the school day.

Oh, they're just, they're the ones that will just walk into your class cursing up a storm. And it doesn't, it doesn't faze them, if they don't get the reward. It doesn't faze them. (Crystal)

The "not being fazed", as Crystal says, was attempted to be mediated by the use of Rotary Club members in the community. The Rotary Club works to "provide service to others, promote integrity, and advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through our fellowship of business, professional, and community leaders" (Rotary, 2022).

We've had outside people come in and try to work with them. We have Rotary Club members that come in and try to help tutor. So, we really do try to reach out into the community and have other people come in and try to work with kids, because sometimes it is that outside influence, maybe they don't have a good home life. Maybe they don't have a father figure to you know, help at home. And then that's where we try to bring in different community members. (Crystal)

Santa's Workshop Points Shopping

One thing that was unique to the Fairfield teachers' experiences with PBIS was the use of a Santa's Workshop. Santa's Workshop is a school-based program where students can shop for Christmas gifts for their families during the school day. My elementary school had a Santa's Workshop, and it was filled with items like coffee mugs, picture frames and other small items for children to gift their parents. In this community, students purchased holiday items with their PBIS points.

But at Christmas time, our kids went shopping for gifts for their parents. Okay, so we're a very low-income area. And so, what we ended up doing it the next year, because we realized, "Oh, my goodness, this is something this is the first time that some of our kids are able to buy a gift for their parents." The next year, we did a Santa's workshop. And our kids were so excited to use their nobles to buy gifts for people. It was unreal. (Crystal)

Reflexivity Statement: This idea hit me pretty hard. I remember going to Santa's Workshop as a kid. I was in a situation where my mom or grandparents could give me 10 dollars to spend

at the Santa's Workshop. I vividly remember that the gifts were nothing special, but I felt so

great being able to pick out my own gift for them and wrap it at school. I know that some

students were not in the same situation as me, but other parents could send in extra money or

the school would donate money so that every kid had an opportunity to get something from the

Workshop. If in this scenario the items were bought with PBIS points, then the students who

are continuously not meeting the expectations of the school will not get to shop… and based

on the experiences of the teachers, it seems like those students may also be the ones who might

not have a happy and safe Christmas at home. It's things like this that make me really wonder

what the goal of PBIS is. I wonder if there are any students in the school who do not celebrate

Christmas and find no value in this event. Again, it is the norm of the people in power that

Christmas should be celebrated.

The Coal Mine

Much like the Tremont PBIS store and rewards, the money does not come from the

school directly. Tremont was receiving donations from WorldVision and community members.

With Fairfield, the money for PBIS comes from community interaction with the local coal mine.

Crystal was the only participant in the Fairfield setting to really discuss with me where the

money comes from to fund the PBIS program, and I assume this is because she has been a

teacher at Fairfield longer than Julia to see how the program started and adapted, but is also still

in her position where Sophia now works at a different school. Crystal has been a part of PBIS

committees, has been sent to meetings about PBIS, and has been more involved in the entire

process that seems to have stretched around eight years of jumping into, officially starting, and

taking a hiatus from PBIS. Because Tremont teachers and faculty talked more openly about the

Aquabats being a large source of funding and donations for their program, I wanted to learn

more about the funding sources for a school who was not partnering with an outside organization

like the Aquabats. Crystal explains below that the coal mine in the county helps with the

financial resources through hosting their safety trainings at the school. Crystal and other teachers

provide breakfast and lunches for the coal miners during their training. With the same overall

concept of a bake sale, the profits from the meals made at the school are then used for PBIS

programming and events like the items for Santa's Workshop and to offset the costs of travel and

ticketing for off-campus field trips.

> We have a mine in our town. [Coal Company] has a big mine in Fairfield. And so they had to do trainings. And they use our building for trainings. And so we do their breakfast and lunch, okay, so then they pay for us to do their breakfast and lunch and use our building. And so we do like four or five of those every year. And so the teachers go in and work it and do all of that on Saturdays, that they need it. And so that's how we fund our PBIS. And like I said, we even did it this year. And we did it last year, knowing that we didn't have PBIS, just so we would keep money in our account. And that's how we fund our school store, the Santa's workshop, pay for the buses for any field trips, all of that kind of stuff, just so we just so we know that there's money there, but we had raised money for the Santa's workshop, but didn't wasn't able to do it for a couple of years. (Crystal)

Reflexivity Statement: Why are teachers working on the weekends to fund the school's

behavior management system? Teachers are already overworked and underpaid, especially in

this region. I say I can't imagine- but I can and I have. I've parked cars for sporting events,

held car washes and bought supplies myself because the money wasn't there. If having an SEL

program and a behavior management system is mandated by the state department of education

(WV Policy 2510), then why is the state not responsible for the bill? It just seems so odd to me

that a private corporation that, though employees many community members, has also caused

much geographical and environmental damage in our state is funding so much of a school

program.

Theme 3: Purposeful Points

So we have to be a little more. I don't know, a little more in touch with, you know, knowing what the job force and the workplace is going to expect of our students and getting them prepared for before going out and actually holding the job. We're lacking a little bit there.
(Crystal)

One question I keep returning to is, "what's the point" of giving PBIS points? Crystal talks above about how the expectations we set forth in the school are often meant to set students up for future success, but maybe we as educators are not quite hitting the mark. Crystal spoke about both college bound students and students who will go straight into the workforce out of high school. Her experiences with awarding points seemed to come from a different perspective when comparing it to future expectations for students.

> And quite honestly, it's [not being prepared] starting to show with our workforce, we can just, we can see that. But- observe all rules. I mean, that's one of ours. Okay, well, first of all, what are the rules? Maybe we're not going over what those rules are. Okay, so what are the rules? And then what do we mean, observe them? Are we really explaining what the word observe means? Because maybe not all of our students know what the word observe means. And then, you know, he had to explain all of that. And then what does it mean? What does it look like here? What is it going to look like when you go to high school? What does it look like when you go to college or enter the workforce? (Crystal)

Reflexivity Statement: I keep critically reflecting on Crystal's idea of preparing students for life and not just for school. I want students to feel prepared for the workforce or for college. I think that she brings some important factors to our discussion that reflect her experiences of being an educator in this community. She wants her students to be successful as any caring educator does, but does success equate to following rules? And like she said, what are the rules, who established them, and how do they apply to our students? These scenarios are ever changing and will continue to change as our current students grow up and continue through school and their future

careers. How can we maybe not prepare them for the future rules and expectations, but teach them to understand their own needs and question their position in a given place? These societal rules are perpetuated by people in power, and the narrative of these students will still be controlled by their adherence to the rules.

Even though Crystal questioned what exactly these overarching expectations were in the school and how they will apply to life outside of Fairfield Middle, there was still much discussion around how teachers in the building are awarding points and what they expect of their students. Crystal talked with me about setting students up for future success, not just success within the building.

> We talked about self-awareness and social awareness and things that are going to help them not only in school, and you know, where they go to college, but will also help them in the workforce. And I tell them that these are things that people kind of expect them to know. But no one ever really teaches you. You know, how do you communicate with…? How do you communicate properly with a teacher? Or how do you communicate properly with a boss, you're expected to know those things. But no one ever really set you down to say, "How will you do this? How do you write a proper email to someone?" Well, you're expected to know how to do that. But whoever sat you down and taught you to do that I did in my old class. But other than that, I don't know that anyone ever did. So we do look at that. (Crystal)

Crystal also touched on an issue that has affected the region that Fairfield is in. There were multiple times throughout the interviews that all three participants mentioned drug use in the community, specifically drug use by parents that could lead to changes for their family and child's life such as out of home placement or foster care. Crystal, however, continued on to say that she believes part of the expectations she should hold for her students involves discussing what could be expected of them in the future, how they might be prepared to get and maintain a career.

> If they say we're going to do drug testing? And it's going to be spontaneous, and you're not going to know what that you know, when it's going to happen? What does that mean

that you're going to have to do? So, we have to be a little more…a little more in touch with, you know, knowing what the job force and the workplace is going to expect of our students and getting them prepared for before going out and actually holding the job. We're lacking a little bit there. (Crystal)

Reflexivity Statement: The issue of drug use is prevalent in many parts of the United States, but also has a high occurrence rate in this region of Appalachia. Unfortunately, this statistic is an identifying factor for the region affecting the perception of the people here. Like in Vance's Hillbilly Elegy, there is a notion that the opioid crisis is an issue central to this area. Opioids have affected many regions of the United States, but it seems that Appalachia has become synonymous with overdose deaths and drug abuse. Crystal's concerns are valid, and through her experience, I could feel her concern for her students needing to know about navigating this in their future jobs. I find it important that she says we need to be more "in touch" with what is happening. The issue of drugs is often taboo in schools when it is in schools that students should be able to have access to resources to prevent substance abuse. Of course, the discussion of these issues in schools would only be a small portion of the work that needs done to tackle the issue of drug overdoses and deaths.

The issue of substance abuse has strong ties to the traumatic situations the students in the region have faced. The following sections of this chapter explore the experiences of the participants in their relationships with their students who have experienced childhood trauma.

Theme 4: "Leaving it at the door"

The lives of our students inevitably make their way into our classroom. Our students carry with them a variety of stories and experiences, not all of them negative. Nonetheless, these human experiences make up who we are as people. As teachers we also bring our lives into the

classroom and can also absorb our students' lives and take them back home with us. Julia

discusses her emotions as a teacher.

> Um, I mean, I try not to let it show because I'm a very emotional person. I love everything, like it's in my heart because I really truly care about them. They need to know that like your focus on your education also for them of course, but like I just tried to be like that consistent point in their life when they might not have anything else consistent because I feel like when you have consistency you have support you have something you can count on when they might not have that and I want them to know that I'm that consistently they can count on. (Julia)

Sophia felt similarly.

> I'm an emotional person, it might, you know, already, and so like, anytime someone's upset, like, I feel that for them, so when I hear that a student is going through something, um, you know, it definitely hits me. (Sophia)

> As Sophia and I continued talking, I asked her to elaborate more on what she felt as a

teacher, feeling upset when a student is upset and how that may interfere with her professional

and personal life.

> I think you almost take on that trauma to a certain extent that your students are facing, because you're with them so much. And, you know, you care about them, you want what's best for them. And when they're going through that stuff, you're not directly going through it, but you're there to support them. So. it's affecting you to, like, I think teachers should have to have, like required therapy sessions, because of everything that we go through and like our students go through anymore, especially in our area, the trauma that, you know, is rampant with our students that you almost need to have a therapist to be able to cope with it. (Sophia)

Reflexivity Statement: These feelings of caring about students and knowing they may be carrying traumatic experiences with them into the classroom are a lot of what drove me to wanting to research teachers' experiences using PBIS. I also have felt these emotions and taken on the role of a reliable adult in the lives of so many of my students. Like Julia, I do truly care about them, but I also fear that this deeply rooted love for our students or, like Sophia, taking on the emotions of our students, could be a major driving factor in teacher burn out

across the nation. The teacher shortage we all talk about is being addressed by hiring

unqualified professionals to fill the gaps instead of taking a hard and truthful look into what

educators are doing each day. There may be educators who are not as concerned about their

relationships with their students and the experiences their students bring into the classroom,

I'm sure of it. Just as I am sure there are teachers who have left the profession for other

reasons- but the experiences of teachers are critical in the discussion of the current state of

education.

One thing that all of the participants talked about was the idea of the students "dropping

their problems" at the classroom door and focusing on the educational tasks.

> How about this, you drop it at my door, and bring it in with you? I mean, I know that
> sounds crazy. But I did that with a couple of kids. And like, I'm not 'so and so'. Drop that
> at the door, you can pick it up when you leave, but drop it at my door. (Crystal)

> I'm trying to think of how to word this, like, open the door to kind of turn that off and just
> be like focus on education. (Julia)

Julia and Crystal both discuss here this ideology that whatever the students are

metaphorically carrying with them that day, whatever is bringing them down should be "left"

outside of the classroom. The new focus is learning the subject matter for the day, and the other

concerns are pushed to the wayside.

> Just give them that chance to, like, have that escape in a sense. And to still focus on
> learning and to have that consistency of structure that they're really needing when they
> might be experiencing a rough time outside of school. (Julia)

Reflexivity Statement: I hear this a lot...that education can be an escape from whatever the

student may be experiencing at home. I've probably even been guilty of saying something like

this. I've told students my classroom is a safe place and a place to be themselves without any

fear or stress. I don't think these teachers, or myself, meant this in a way of dismissing the students' feelings, but more in a way of changing the subject to be productive for what needs done for the teachers' agenda and also getting the students' mind off of the negative experiences of their day. Initially, the idea of asking students to leave their problems behind felt horrible to me, like their needs and emotions were being dismissed, but I keep coming back to these thoughts….and if the strategies we are given surrounding systems like PBIS are what are expected of us, then of course we [educators] are going to shift the focus into class and subject-based materials. Julia's second statement, that school could be an escape…how can we make the "escape" from whatever is going on at home better for the students? An escape might be welcome, but with PBIS, it seems we are doing a better job rewarding and 'paying' the students who don't need to "leave it at the door."

Julia did continue on to discuss that "leaving it at the door" may not always be a successful approach.

> If they feel like it is something extreme, they don't want to talk to anybody, then just reporting that to a counselor, to an administrator. I've had instances where I couldn't really get a child in my room, like having some kind of an outburst or just freaking out about something Upon entering, so I just had them removed and that's kind of a situation with an administrator. (Julia)

Reflexivity Statement: Earlier, it was stated that the teachers' relationships with the administration and counselors were not always positive, and not all students felt a connection with the counselors as well. In these situations, the teacher needs a clear line of communication and support to best help the students' needs, but if the collaborative team is not getting along or communicating well, it is not going to be of assistance to the student. I've had open and reflective conversations with the guidance counselor in my school. Much like the counselor at

Tremont was insistent that teachers are not guidance counselors, guidance counselors are not teachers. There needs to be more of a collaborative effort in supporting students in need.

Theme 5: Grit and Resilience

> Yeah, we know that we have some students that just their home life is very, very difficult. We've had a few come through that we know that they either don't have, they only have one parent at home. So, they're either missing their mom, or they're missing their dad. We've had kids that have had siblings be sent off to placements. So, we know the backstories. We know the difficulties that they're facing. (Crystal)

The overall theme of grit and resilience was more pronounced in the middle school interviews than they were in the interviews with Tremont Elementary School. The teachers at Fairfield seemed to have more experience with both discussing the ACE scores of students and their traumatic events. There was also more of an open discussion with the grit and resilience frameworks amongst the middle school teachers.

> So, when I was a sub, I've, you know, had a harder line with kids. But now being more trauma informed, and learning these ACE scores, and just, you know, everyday teaching with kids, it does change your way of teaching, and how you see your students and how you deal with your students. You've gone through multiple trainings on the ACE scores, and they brought people in here for us. They did one really big training up in Upshur County that they sent a couple of us to. And so, some of those were very eye opening. (Crystal)

Both Crystal and Sophia had the opportunity to attend an out-of-district training on the ACE scores and bring their knowledge back to their school.

> Another teacher, [Crystal], and I participated in like two days, one or two day long, PD event that dealt with childhood trauma. And there were all kinds of different sessions on how you know, how do you note how do you see it in the classroom? How do you deal with it in the classroom? How does it affect student learning? And that was a really good training that we took a lot back from. I know one thing that Melissa and I tried implementing in our classrooms were just like, little things like having fidget toys available. So, because a lot of those kids are very fidgety and almost ADHD, so having something like that available, we started utilizing those in our classrooms and just trying to do little things too. (Sophia)

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Though Sophia and Crystal both had the chance to learn more about childhood trauma and tried to implement classroom strategies to help with students' needs such as fidgets, there are other teachers in the building who have not experienced these trainings. Julia talked with me about students who have experienced trauma having a more difficult time in the classrooms setting, but that did not mean to her they didn't have the ability to accomplish things, but that their "grit" was being used in their personal life, and that "showing up", as she states below was what they could accomplish in the moment.

> I think the children that have experienced childhood trauma and stress definitely have maybe a more difficult time, you could say, with grit and resilience, but at the same time, a lot of them have already achieved that just in their own personal lives. It's just kind of being there and showing up. So maybe struggling more with that on the education side, I mean, as well as the personal side, but I think they probably have displayed it maybe in other ways at home, we just don't know. (Julia)

Reflexivity Statement: Wow. This statement. There are so many things students do everyday that we either have no idea about or have not experienced. I keep coming back to this statement. How can we measure and even reward through a capital system someone's grit or willingness to complete a task or follow through with expectations in a certain setting? If my resilience was measured through my ability to perform a musical task, I would not earn many points. However, the expectations were not that I was excelling in music, but that we could discuss what I don't understand about music, I think the experience would be much more positive for me. If our students are not succeeding in the school environment- we, as teachers, need to know why. Not why they don't immediately conform and perform the way the school expectations are written, but perhaps they really do not understand what is being asked of them. Much of the literature around grit in the classroom talks about being able to get through a hard task by continuing to try and to have a positive mindset. With having a positive mindset,

I really think that is something that is a privilege that not all students are afforded. If your surroundings are constantly saying you can't do something, or with PBIS and behavior models, you are constantly not being awarded points, then the positive mindset has nothing to grow with. You can't pour from an empty cup. I really noticed this in talking with Crystal. How are we setting students up for success if we are not even making sure they don't have questions- but just awarding points to the students who are "already" meeting the "standard" set forth by a committee of teachers who may not, and probably don't have the same lived experiences as their students?

Sophia was able to recall a specific experience about students' trauma from when she was teaching special education at the time that Fairfield was using PBIS.

> Like, when I was teaching Special Ed, um, I, we had a student who disappeared, she was essentially kidnapped. And over Labor Day weekend, she had went and met people online, and went off with them. She was a seventh grader at this time, although I think age-wise she was more of an eighth grader, because of being held back, and was missing for the weekend, and held, like, was kidnapped and held in a room and I'm pretty sure was sexually assaulted. Until they tracked them down. And so like, that was really scary. And definitely… something like that has stuck with me forever. Like, after she was found, like I was a teacher, who she had had, and had a good relationship with. And one of the counselors actually asked me to go with her on a home visit, after everything had happened, because she knew that we had a good relationship and everything, to just check in on her to see how she was doing so she could see a familiar face from school. So, um, you know, anytime students go through trauma, I think if you have any sort of relationship with them, that, you know, it's going to hit you too, and it's gonna stay with you. (Sophia)

Sophia's experience as a teacher is, as she said, something that will stick with her forever. When teachers are aware of the stories their students are coming into the classroom with, it can affect and change the way the approach the students and the classroom setting. Crystal talked through her interviews about students in the area being raised by grandparents, a topic that was

also discussed from the elementary participants. Crystal opened up that her parents were also

part of the "grandfamily" population, raising her niece.

> You know, it's not always the families you think it is. Because people who know my family, but have never thought that my parents would be raising a grandchild. And so, you know, you have to remind people, you know, it's not always, you know, the kid that you think it's going to be. (Crystal)

Crystal had talked before sharing her family's experience that many students who are

living with a grand family could be there because of drug use by the birth parent, but that wasn't

always the case. She opened up more about her own experiences in seeing a multitude of reasons

that a grandparent could be the main caretaker for a child and the lasting impacts that can have.

> And so I guess seeing her trauma from it kind of makes me step back and look at some of our other kids and go, Huh, that's kind of the same way that she has acted. And so could that be. And so that sends me on a hunt for our counselors, or someone that knows that family to dig a little deeper. So it's changed my way of teaching. (Crystal)

All three participants talked through the idea of trauma in the classroom from a place of wanting to be a safety zone for their students. While Julia may not question her students and their personal lives, she does always want to foster a warm classroom environment.

> Um, it's hard because I really don't like… I don't pry, I don't really know, always a lot of what goes on at home. But honestly, like, I just really try to build them up and just show them that they have a place that they can do well, that I'm going to support them. And that they can fail and it's okay, that's how we learn. (Julia)

Crystal discussed her commitment to being fair in the classroom with all students. Her

experience of treating a student who is typically known as a "problem" student the same as a

student who is typically not in trouble in the school environment. From talking with Crystal, it

seems as if her relationship with her students is strong. She may have a tough side as described

below, but she is equally firm with all of her students.

> I show them that I'm fair with them. There's one kid and he always comes, he just comes to mind because he was just a holy terror in our building. And he was good as gold in my class. And even a substitute went to our administration and told them that he was really good in class. And it was because he dropped the "F bomb" in my class one day, and I jumped him for it. And he was like, "Okay, I'm sorry." But then about two days later,

another kid did the same thing. But he saw that I jumped that kid just as much, or probably more than I had jumped him two days before. And so they know that I don't give them special treatment. Everybody's treated the same. I don't care if you're considered the bad kid. You're not the bad kid in my class. So, they see that I don't I don't play favorites. Everyone comes in and on equal footing. (Crystal)

Sophia stressed to me an interesting perspective - that in all the time spent in pre-service teacher education courses, the classes and textbooks really do not prepare you for the day-to-day experiences in the classroom. When a student is having an emotional outburst in the classroom and displays violent traits, a teacher must remain calm and make responsible decisions that vary from student to student.

And just being empathetic towards my students, like, I don't think I don't ever remember any classes in my special education or regular education classes that really prepare you for something like that. I think just knowing that I had to remain calm under the circumstances, so that the situation didn't escalate, is what you know, prepared me and just what I kind of knew is a gut feeling. (Sophia)

Student trauma is a common occurrence in our schools, but handling these occurrences will be different on a case by case scenario. The same approach will not work for all students, but there is more that can be done for pre-service teachers entering the field, and there is more that can be done to maintain teacher involvement in helping their students. Though there are many types of trauma that students can experience such as being raised by a non-parental guardian, drug use in the home, or events such as sexual abuse and trauma, these are not the only factors our students are dealing with on a personal basis. In the next section of this chapter, I discuss the specific implications of COVID-19 on students, specifically at the middle school level.

Student Trauma and the COVID-19 Pandemic

I believe that something worth mentioning in continuing the efforts of this research is the effect of COVID-19 on student stress and trauma. While there are situations where students have

been and are continuing to face traumatic situations that are not related to COVID-19, I think the ramifications of COVID-19 are far beyond the scope of what we are currently doing with PBIS programs.

Reflexivity Statement: I know I constantly hear in the news about the academic regression that was caused from COVID-19 and the absence of in person schooling. Online school was not accessible for all students and even those who were "attending" online school were not always successful. Some students thrived being home! Some students thrived without the social anxiety of school and being comfortable at home, but some students suffered greatly because they were not leaving their home. Personally, I have noticed a lot of changes in students' attention spans since the COVID lockdowns. While educational stakeholders and test companies seem to be so focused on reading and math regression, I and many other teachers are more concerned about the emotional health of our students.

> I think I mentioned before about that, it just seems like behavior has kind of gone downhill in the past couple of years, which may be partly from COVID, maybe partly from not having this. But I think it's definitely impacted it. And we've had more suspensions for sure. We had, I'm trying to think of how many it was right after we got back from Christmas break within like a month. We had like a record number. It was crazy…. Noble And I know, like, we can't blame everything on COVID. But we wondered if part of the impact was not having that PBIS because there's been like a decline [in behavior]. And I don't want to say good behavior, but expected behaviors. And I know they've had like, less structure outside of school and whatnot, too. And I think part of it might also be just like, the turnover we've had, and having a good many new teachers, that's been challenging to just to communicate those expectations as a whole with consistency. (Julia)

As Sophia continued to talk about the types of situations that she has experienced with students not meeting school expectations, she mentioned some disdain for the program when students are showing behaviors perceived as negative.

And honestly, from my experience, like, bringing up the Noble pillars in those types of situations, doesn't help it's talking about that is not something that is going to calm the student down, at least in my experience, and get them back on track with behavior, like saying no, so and so you're not being a noble knight right now, how are noble knights supposed to act? The students would have, you know, said. "F--- that. I don't care about being an F---ing noble knight," that kind of stuff. (Sophia)

Fairfield Middle School experienced an ebb and flow of PBIS implementation and fidelity with mass amounts of staff overturn, administrative changes, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These teachers shared experiences with frustration in consistency in the school with awarding points, but also frustration in reaching their students who have experienced stressful and traumatic situations. The following chapter is a discussion of the findings of the study and the implications within policy, practice and methodology. The following chapter will also discuss future directions for the study and its place in teacher education.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

PBIS is a commonly used program with implementation in over 25,000 schools (Baweja et Al., 2016). Even though it is a commonly used program, there are many issues with implementing it with fidelity and to promote equity (Bradshaw et al., 2012). According to the literature, using PBIS with fidelity would be to follow the program with no straying from the program itself. PBIS has a strict framework and to make it work as per the goals of the program, schools must follow each step carefully. Though PBIS claims to work at a Tier 1, or universal for all students, level, there are concerns in the literature in regard to equity for all students including students of color and students identified with special education needs (Walkley & Cox, 2003). PBIS is structured within a school around the school expectations, and the school expectations are typically put in place by the teachers and administrators. The experiences of teachers and other school faculty members often play into the school expectations, placing those in positions of power; they control the behavioral expectations for the school. Behavioral guidelines have been designed and implemented by those in power, where the teachers have designed rules for the students to follow, and in turn the students will earn a "point" in a capital-based system in which they earn points as symbolic tokens to be traded for goods to compensate their adherence to the rules. Similar to Paolo Freire's Banking Model of education (Freire, 2018), teachers may not only "fill" their students with knowledge, but also fill them with expectations of their own Lifeworld. These banking models are not only depositing behavioral expectations into students, but are also continuing to further drive the divide of classist inequalities seen in society (Apple, 2006). Though there is research on the issues around using PBIS with fidelity and addressing students' ACE scores based on the trauma they have experienced as discussed in chapters 1 and 2 (Felitti et. al., 1998; Horner & Sugai, 2015). There is a gap in the literature on how school-

wide behavior plans are implemented with a trauma lens. There is a lack of discussion about trauma informed practices as an approach to behavior management in schools, leading to a behavioral approach of either monetizing behavioral expectations or working strictly through a punishment system. There is also a gap in the literature around the discussion of grit and the growth mindset mentalities as a privilege. Much of the discussion around the Growth Mindset is focused on the student believing in their ability to overcome obstacles, but there is little discourse on the systemic issues rooted with schools and society in general that make growth-mindedness harder to attain. Having a Growth Mindset is a privilege to be surrounded by accepting and positive peers. The current literatures are rooted within the behavioral systems used in schools and are tied to student success in the classroom.

Because teachers are predominantly White, female, and middle class (NCES, 2021) many school expectations and practices are rooted in the Lifeworlds of these White, middle-class females. Through systems in teacher education such as Ruby Payne's work in the *Culture of Poverty* (2005), and other character education programs such as The Seven Habits programs (Covey, 1998) --like PBIS--contribute to the classist and racist ideologies that are being perpetuated in schools through a business model where students' worth is measured in points awarded for falling in line to the expectations of those in power. When students are experiencing events that could lead to long term trauma symptoms such as drug use in the home, single parent households, grandparents as guardians, or multiple other unique scenarios, the classist and eugenic lens that is guiding the behavioral expectations becomes exclusionary to many students. The purpose of this study has aimed to discuss the inequitable structures of PBIS and the ideas of resiliency that are rooted into the SWPBIS systems. This study opened the experiences of teachers to discuss

1. Financial Implications of Running a PBIS Program for the Schools
2. Consistency in Using the SWPBIS Program and Staff Relationships
3. Earning Points
4. Adequate Training for Teachers
5. Grit and Resilience

These themes were investigated through a phenomenological lens from a case study project. The case study participants were interviewed using semi-structured interview techniques to allow the experiences of each participant to organically open while my own thoughts and experiences were bridled and re-investigated through reflexivity journaling. Phenomenological analysis was utilized using Whole-Part-Whole analysis to understand the participants individually, and collectively in their schools, regarding how PBIS was experienced in each setting. In Theme 1 below, content analysis and document analysis were also used to guide the explanations of the participants' context within the study.

Discussion

This chapter includes a discussion of the findings from the interviews with both the teachers from Tremont Elementary and Fairfield Middle Schools. The research question, "What are rural teachers' experiences in using PBIS for students facing trauma and stress?" opened a vast discussion on both PBIS as a structure within the building and how teachers in this space experience approaching students facing trauma or stressful situations. Though each experience and interview are unique, the broader picture displayed through the weaving of their stories gives meaning to the use of PBIS for the school population. The following sections discuss the implications of the study.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical framework for this study was Lifeworld Theory (Dahlberg, 2008; Van Manen 1990). Lifeworld Theory can be utilized to better understand how our environments make

up who we are and understanding theories in education (Arnot & Yelland, 2020; Bengsston, 2013). In this study, Lifeworld Theory was applied to gain an understanding of the worlds of both the teachers and administrators who are establishing the normative expectations of the schools and the students who are expected to follow them, even if these rules are not a part of the students' day to day Lifeworld. Vagle (2018) states that the Lifeworlds of teachers are valuable tools to educational research as the experiences of our educators matters. Throughout the interviews, participants in this study were asked questions about their experiences in using PBIS, both positive and negative. The participants also discussed various aspects of using a PBIS program such as financial responsibilities, the consistency and fidelity of the program, what "earning points" looked like for them, the purpose of awarding points, and the intertwined notion of grit and resilience in the behavioral expectations. Below, I have organized these five themes to discuss the theoretical implications of each individually as the meaning of their experiences was brought into consciousness through our semi-structured interviews (Davidson, 2000; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Van Manen, 1995). These themes were reached through utilizing Vagle's Whole-Part-Whole analysis process with the interview data (Vagle 2008). Each interview was read and transcribed individually multiple times with the help of transcription software. After each interview was individually processed as a "whole", the "parts" of each interview with overlapping experiences were re-analyzed. The final step of this process was to put these new parts back into the whole theme that is discussed below.

Theme 1: Financial Implications for the Schools

All the participants in the elementary study discussed at some point the cost for the school to continue to run PBIS. At the middle school level, Crystal discussed with me how the program is funded for their school through breakfasts and lunches purchased by local coal miners

during their training in the school building. As discussed in Chapter 2, many schools in rural areas are underfunded, in some areas spending $2,000 less per pupil than in more urbanized areas (Mathis, 2003). The narrative of the coal miners in the Fairfield community eating meals at the school during their training, and the Appalachian branch of WorldVision funding the elementary school indicated that PBIS activities positioned the schools and local communities to need charitable contributions to survive. The mining industry itself has historically paid its workers through scrip, tokens only having worth in the community itself (Timberlake, 1987). It's ironic then that the PBIS points are also a form of scrip, with students earning points for meeting the "company's" or the school's expectations, then only being able to spend the points for items or experiences within the school setting. With the school store at Tremont, there was also a connection to the global market with the intertwined theme of the Aquabats being used with the program. Even though the Aquabats initially made the first videos for the school for free, the Aquabats have plans to work with Tremont to market their school-based program and have other schools or districts buy-in to their program (Gloopy Industries, 2022).

Christian discourses intertwined with historical Appalachian narratives of scrip in interesting ways. This was true for the Santa's Workshop store where students could purchase Christmas presents for family members using their PBIS points. In this setting, the vast majority of students seemed to celebrate Christmas; however, this does not mean that all students celebrate Christmas, and this is a factor that needs to be taken into consideration when working towards inclusive practices. Students who do not celebrate Christmas may not feel as accepted in their school environment if the one major event of the year is shopping for Christmas presents at the school's Santa's Workshop. When applying these themes to a broader context, perhaps outside of the Fairfield community, considering the religious and ethnic backgrounds of all

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students and families is crucial to a progressive and restorative environment where the Lifeworlds of our students are taken into consideration for the functions of the school year. When the school environment is not inclusive to all students and families, trauma can be perpetuated by exclusionary practices that are deeply rooted in the neutrality of behavioral programs like PBIS.

Theme 2: Consistency and Staff Relationships

Another major discussion across all participants in both settings was the idea of consistency and fidelity with implementation of the school's PBIS expectations. All participants explained in their interviews what the school expectations were; that they were simple rules such as being kind, being safe, and being responsible. The difference in their answers came when I asked what that meant to them. Using phenomenological methods inspired by Vagle (2018) and Dahlberg (2008) allowed me to not only bridle my own experiences in using PBIS as teacher, but to allow each participant to really dig into their own experiences in using PBIS. The semi-structured interviews allowed room in our discussions to ask more about the specific experiences that teachers were having and to critically reflect on each individual before thinking of the whole collection of data and how the participants' experiences were similar in some regards while different in others. Some teachers such as Brittany discussed that for her, being responsible in her music class meant treating the instruments responsibly and only playing the instrument when it was your turn. In Sophia's class at the middle school, being responsible meant having a pencil and having your assignment book. Courtney felt that being responsible meant having your nightly folder signed by a guardian and having your homework completed. Crystal's idea of responsibility was not necessarily bringing a certain item to class, but her idea of responsibility was having all your typing tests completed each week. With these differences in how teachers

were perceiving what the pillars of PBIS meant to them within their school setting, it is not surprising that the teachers all had different expectations for the students. Because of this, the fidelity of following the strict model of PBIS was not effective. Listening to the experiences of the teachers had me reflecting on what the desired outcomes of the PBIS expectations were. It should not be surprising that students behave in ways that do not meet our own expectations of being safe, responsible, respectful, and prepared. Similarly, students who have experienced various degrees of trauma are going to display trauma in various ways. ACEs include a wide variety of scenarios that students may live through, and though higher ACE score is associated with higher morbidity and mortality rates in adults, there is not a standardized answer to how children will respond to trauma (Felitti et. al., 1998). By placing the same expectations onto all students, teachers are not encompassing the differences that their students bring to the classroom. Similar to an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) requiring modified academics for students, consideration should be taken in applying modifications in approaching students' individual ACE scores.

Teachers were frustrated in their interviews that not all staff members were being as strict- or as consistent- with awarding points. In their interviews, the teachers felt frustrated in the sense they felt they were being undermined by their staff members. In elementary school, there was frustration with Brittany and Courtney that Larry was giving points at lunch for simply being at lunch. Larry felt as if he was following the rules according to plan since one of the pillars of success for the PBIS program was attendance. In a typical elementary setting, the elementary school teachers are with their students all day and tend to have a distinct set of rules and expectations for their specific classroom. In this study, none of the three elementary participants were classroom teachers, but were counselors (Larry) and specialists in the school

who worked with a variety of students throughout the day, not the same homeroom consistently. The elementary school participants described experiences of frustration and not knowing what to do. Though the middle school teachers were all classroom teachers, there are still differences in the structure of the classes between the middle and elementary schools. At the middle school, the participants discussed their different success stories and "misses", as Tyre and Feuerborn (2021) would call them. The "misses" in PBIS application seem to revolve around what the points were given for and the expectations of the teachers themselves. Due to a lack of knowledge and training, the participants in the study echoed that they felt disconnected from the decisions being made about the use of PBIS because not all teachers and staff members were included in the training. This discussion on training for teachers will continue to be discussed in Theme 4 below.

Theme 3: Earning Points & The Purpose of Points

Bradshaw et. al. (2008) explains the Tier 1 interventions of PBIS to reinforce positive behaviors by providing incentives for meeting site-based expectations. Both schools in the study had not yet gone beyond Tier 1 interventions, as is seen with many schools attempting to implement the program (Bradshaw et al., 2012; Cavanaugh & Swan, 2015; Cressey et al., 2003; Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2021). During the interviews, a major point of discussion was about the participants' experiences in awarding points to the students. Similar to the consistency in the program discussed above, there were vast differences in what the teachers felt was "point worthy" behavior.

Each teacher seemed to value something different in their classroom as a very important element of meeting expectations and being successful. When these expectations were met, the teacher would award students points. Conversely, there was some animosity at times about what other teachers were awarding points for or even what their prizes were. Because our Lifewords

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all carry different backgrounds and meaning, we place value on different behaviors and different rewards for students. Brittany, a music teacher, placed a lot of value on students being gentle with the instruments and only playing them when they were being asked to. Courtney talked a lot about being "kind" by keeping things clean and tidy. Larry on the other hand would award points for attendance during lunch, which led to frustration for teachers such as Courtney and Brittany because their own morals and expectations were not aligned with attending lunch being a "point worthy" behavior.

The experiences of the participants were opened to elaborate on what the purpose of awarding points was. While the elementary school participants seem more focused on simply following the expectations as a type of route learning, the middle school participants did show in their discussions with me that they want to use PBIS and the school expectations to better their students' futures. Through the discussion with both the elementary and middle school participants, there were differences in what the rewards were at the schools and how the students interacted with interest towards the reward. The schools seemed to have different rewards for the students for a few reasons. The elementary school did not "charge" the students points to attend off-campus field trips as that was focused on the clip moving system in the elementary school. At the elementary school, there was a school store that was open for shopping twice in the past year that was filled with trinket toys and bigger ticket items such as Lego sets while the middle school did not have a consistent school store, but did use the students points for Santa's workshop and smaller weekly rewards like popcorn on Fridays. By giving the students points for abiding by expectations, the tangible rewards become a way to manage the outward effects of student behavior. If a student can earn a prize by following the rule, the solution was to mask the behavior in order for a prize. PBIS and other behavior plans often mute the behavior by awarding

students for following the norm. The teachers in this study have different expectations for their class. Rules and expectations are not quantifiable by standardized practices. Student behavior is related to the social and emotional needs of the student, and understanding the students' emotions is important to building relationships and trust in the classroom. Even if there were such a set of social and emotional standards, emotional well-being and behavioral expectations are not universal qualities. I argue that schools should work towards becoming all-encompassing of the backgrounds, cultures, and stories that our students are bringing with them to school (Bishop, 2010; Socol, 2014).

Theme 4: Adequate Training for Teachers

Throughout the interviews with the participants, a conversation about inadequate training was prevalent. In their experiences and mine alike, not all teachers were invited to the on-site training, but a select group of faculty members would attend with the intention to bring back the information to the school. The literature surrounding PBIS states these concerns as a top reason PBIS could fail in a school district (Berzin et al., 2105; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Horner & Sugai, 2015), but I argue that the systemic issues of PBIS go far beyond training, especially when the training teachers are receiving at a school, district, state, or even national level could continue to perpetuate harmful narratives around the cultural identities of students and traumatic experiences.

When the information was brought back, there were still instances where not all teachers were getting the information. In some cases, information was only being shared via email, and in other instances, information was disseminated at grade level team meetings, but not all teachers belonged to a grade level team. With these discrepancies, the information about program implementation was lost.

In chapters 1 and 2, I discussed in the literature the difficulty of teacher buy-in to PBIS programs and other new curriculums and structures that teachers are constantly inundated with. (Alisic et al., 2012; Ringstein et al., 2003). Teacher buy-in was viewed negatively by Larry when talking about training. The other participant, however, talked less about one more thing to do and more about the lack of access they had to learning about the program. The experiences shared by the participants explained the PBIS trainings as a top-down system where PBIS specialists gave information to the specific school based PBIS team. Then, the PBIS team was responsible for sharing that information with the rest of the school. The participants discussed their perceptions of failure at this communication through frustrated talks of not understanding what was expected of them. Some teachers, as Crystal mentioned, did not have a common planning time with other grade-specific teachers, and because of that were never officially given information by their PBIS team.

With the experiences of the teachers and the literature in chapters 1 and 2, there is a need for support for trauma care training. According to the literature, teachers have been responsive to training related to trauma informed care and trauma lensed practices (Berzin et al., 2011; Eiraldi et al., 2019; Rishel et al., 2019; Walkley & Cox, 2003). In addition to this literature, the experiences shared by the participants around trauma included wanting to know more about how to approach students who are struggling with trauma and acknowledging that many students in the community have lived through traumatic or stressful experiences. In the future studies portion of this chapter, I discuss CASEL based practices such as restorative justice programs and the Zones of Regulation (Kuypers, 2011) as an alternative to the solution-based practices of PBIS.

Theme 5: Grit and Resilience

A major theme going into the data collection was centered around the idea of grit models and resilience frameworks being embedded into the school expectations (Duckworth, 2007, Sanguras, 2018). In each participant interview, I asked participants to share their experiences with grit models being used in their classroom expectations and in their process of awarding students points. At the elementary school level, the idea of grit did not come to the forefront as much as I had anticipated. When directly asked about grit, teachers' experiences that the word "grit" was not a part of the school expectations, but as their experiences continued to open through reflection and analysis, I saw that it is not so much about the literal use of the word "grit" and more about the deeply rooted idea of meritocracy and hard work that is imbedded into our school systems (Urban & Wagoner, 2008). Though the term "grit" may not have been explicitly mentioned, there are places throughout the interviews where participants talked about students' inability to "just" follow the rules and be prepared. Sophia, for example, discussed her policy on awarding points for being prepared for class while simultaneously providing daily supplies for all of her students. She felt a great deal of frustration when students were not taking advantage of the supplies sitting out and still coming to class unprepared as per the daily expectation. These emotions Sophia explained juxtaposes her desire to be a caring teacher providing opportunities for her students while also feeling frustrated that it still wasn't enough. This relates to the idea of grit in that the students could not do, or would not do, something that Sophia saw as simple, but that the students were not following through with. Multiple times, Sophia and other participants mentioned how much they cared about their students and how they felt the students' trauma and stress affected their professional and personal lives. In order to respond to these students, it is important that teachers understand children's individual contexts

of trauma. In the Future Studies portion of this chapter, I will discuss the need for further work in teachers' knowledge and confidence in understanding contexts of trauma and different strategies to use in order to build relationships and restoratively approach students who have experienced trauma.

Methodological Implications

Because of the theoretical lens of the Lifeworlds Study in this project, the chosen methodological approach was a combination of Case Study Analysis with phenomenological interpretation. Both of these methods were carefully chosen to highlight two elements of the research question. Case study methods were used to highlight the experiences of a specific group of teachers; teachers in the Appalachian region who were identified as PBIS cohort participant schools. Phenomenology and specifically Lifeworld's Theory was used to allow the natural experience to open up. Van Manen's Elements of the Lifeworld was used in this study to embody two elements, Lived Space and Lived Relations (Van Manen, 1997). According to Van Manen (1990), Lived Experience is the basis of Phenomenological research with the beginning and end both being encompassed by the Lived Experience itself. Lived space was utilized in this study as a way to identify how teachers felt in their given space, in this case, the school. Lived relations was used to emphasize the relationships the participants had with each other and with the other school faculty members as the PBIS models were introduced and incorporated into the school. According to Van Manen, Lived Relations is also where Lived Space and Lived Time intersect, as our bodies tell a story through language and how time is measured and affects our experiences. Throughout this study, Lived Time became more of a pronounced framework due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the time of Post-COVID schooling, there were many factors that

changed how teachers experienced PBIS and many shifts in not only expectations, but the relations of the staff as well through large amounts of staff turnover and administrative changes.

The participants' relationships and interview discussion alongside my own reflexivity as a researcher situated within the context. From a methodological perspective, it is critical to reflect on the Daesin and reflexivity of the study, the foresight of the study, and how the hermeneutic circle was utilized.

Due to the experiences that came into consciousness during the interviews, content analysis was added to the methodology to frame Theme 1: Financial Implications for the Schools. Content analysis rests on the assumption that texts are a rich data source with great potential to reveal valuable information about particular phenomena. In Theme 1, the content being analyzed is both the interview data and the available information on the programs being discussed. With Interpretive Content Analysis, the meaning is not necessarily confined within the text, but uses inferences to discuss "why" and "who" beyond the "what" that is stated within the text (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Content Analysis is not about simply coding frequency, but going beyond the quantifiable elements of a text and making meaning through inferential knowledge that is still empirically relevant (Drisko & Maschi, 2015; Krippendorf, 2013). The thematic data of financial implications for the schools is analyzed through Interpretive Content Analysis. On a surface level of utilizing Basic Content Analysis, I could have coded from the data the amount of times each participant mentioned funding for the program and the amount of times that school-based points were mentioned. This would have allowed for a baseline of information on how relevant the topic was. However, because this data was discussed using interpretive content analysis, bringing in inferences of the regional tie to coal, the band member's religious

affiliations and the context of the Aquabats attempting to make a musical comeback allowed for the content to be more rich in meaning.

Dasein

Dasein can be described as the researcher's presence within the study (Peoples, 2021). By identifying my own Dasein, I can be transparent as a participant in my own research by bridling my own experiences and reflectively journaling throughout the process of data collection and analysis. Dasein includes being authentic when engaging in the phenomena. It is important to recognize the inability to truly be one's complete and authentic "self" as a teacher, and through the lens of PBIS as the expectations are not all encompassing of everyone's authenticity outside of the White, middle-class shell it perpetuates (Power-Carter and Bloom, 2022). Dasein is also critiqued at a deeper level by Martin Buber through his ideas of the I-You and I-It relationships that exist in the world. To live in an I-You relationship, the "I", or researcher in this sense, would be completely mutual between both participants and would be completely in the moment, and therefore, there would not even be any prior conceptions to suspend. Therefore, from the perspective of Buber, this research engaged with the participants and the system of PBIS itself as an I-It model (Skeleton Man, 2021). Because the I-It model does not rely on complete "in-ness" of the moment and can allow for the bridling of one's prior experiences as mentioned by Dahlberg. This I-It relationship values the experience itself over the relationship between two things or people (Richards, 2017).

In approaching this study, I did hold my own preconceptions of PBIS since I had been a participant in both utilizing the program as a teacher and being a part of my school's PBIS committee. Though I used bridling throughout my interview questions and throughout the reflexivity process, it is important for me to discuss my assumptions of the study. Coming into

the study, I was anticipating the schools to have more of an official, branded model of character education that was used in conjunction with their PBIS expectations. These programs would include names such as "The 7 Habits" brand, which includes multiple books ranging from elementary school to adulthood, Second Step, TEAMology, or a variety of others that were not discussed in the prior literature. Neither school used a supplemental character education program, but the elementary school was working on creating their own. Through reflexive work and inquiry into the Aquabats, it seems that the Lifeworld of Larry was seeping into the school at a deep level, using the Aquabats band members and music as a base of behavioral expectations for the school. Though Larry described through his interviews that he was not being heard by the staff and families of the school, there were other participants who described being confused about who the Aquabats were and how the band became intertwined with their school behavior plans.

My preconceptions of the study also included anticipation for more discussion around the Growth Mindset and grit frameworks being included in the teachers' experiences. Because my experiences have been heavily rooted in the Growth Mindset, I had notions that other schools in the region would share these experiences. There are discrepancies in the context of my former position as a teacher and the context of the study. While both schools fall within Appalachia, Fairfield County is considered rural while my former county was considered a metro county with larger populations of people in the city limits of the county seat. My former position had a more diverse population of students and a larger student body. Because of this, my experiences were also rooted in school-based professional development where there was more consideration around ACE experiences such as immigration and cultural differences with non-white students. The student population at both schools in the study was over 90% White. These preconceptions

of the study were also prompted by the WVDE Policy 2510 where all middle schools in West

Virginia must include social-emotional instruction for 25 minutes daily (WVDE, 2021). Though

many of the participants did discuss their desire for students to follow the expectations simply

because they were the expectations, the language of grit was not present in their experiences. The

body language and tone of the teachers in the interviews were perceived as worn out and tired of

fighting with students over the expectations. It seemed as if they were grasping at straws to get

through their content as they talked about making deals with students to "behave" and rewarding

them through purchasing time outside or bags of popcorn every week.

Hermeneutic Circle

In hermeneutics analysis never truly ends, but is a constant cycle of the phenomena and

the experiences surrounding it (Vagle, 2018; Van Manen, 2016a). This statement holds true with

this project, as even though the current work with the included participants is done, there is still

more understanding to come from their experiences moving forward. Because the hermeneutic

circle and Vagle's Whole-Part-Whole analysis led me as the researcher to revisit the data

multiple times, my understanding of the data was fluid throughout the duration of the study and

the writing and reflexivity process.

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Implications for Policy and Practice

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In 1999, the state of Maryland implemented a pilot program using PBIS in schools. This

pilot program led to the statewide roll out of PBIS programming in schools to reduce

suspensions and improve overall student behavior in school. Recently, it has come to light

amongst many schools in the state of Maryland and many other schools in the country that

building classroom communities has far greater impact than rewarding students with tangible

prizes for doing what they are told. Building from Hammond's (2014) *Culturally Responsive*

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Teaching and the Brain, one particular school district in Maryland amongst others are working towards models of community engagement through community circles within the school day and through models of restorative practices. "Restorative justice methods used to address student misbehavior in schools are similar to the approaches used in the criminal justice system that effectively focus on repairing the harm caused by crime by involving offenders, victims, and the community" (Payne & Welch, 2015, p. 540).

Restorative practices are also rooted within the thought that students need to be taught how to identify their emotions to understand their reactions to their emotions. To do this, students work with their teachers and guidance counselors to identify their emotions at multiple points throughout the day with the faculty of the building also participating in identifying their emotions to model and offer multiple coping strategies and resources for students who may need it. This specific model is known as the Zones of Regulation (Kuypers, 2011).

Larry considered himself a solution-based counselor, and much of PBIS is rooted in reinforcing positive behavior. Solution-based practices and positive reinforcement rely on a focus toward what is coming to the surface of the students' day instead of understanding the "why" behind the behaviors that students are showing. By moving to a restorative approach, the focus would be taken away from the solution to curb the behavior and focus on the root of the emotion the student is experiencing.

Practice in K-12 Schools

As a public classroom teacher for the last 10 years, there has rarely been a time that my school has not provided a set disciplinary system. The few months that there was not a behavioral program utilized were the unique months of hybrid and online school due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While I understand the need for rules in school for overall student safety

and organization, there is a need to critically reflect on the expectations in place on students and the way that students are rewarded capital for meeting them. This project aimed to highlight the inadequate structures in classrooms and schools in general that uphold the behavioral expectations for the students and staff alike.

The Lived Relations of Counselors and Teachers

Throughout the study, particularly at the elementary school, there seemed to be a disconnect between Larry, a counselor, and the two teacher participants. Larry's perception of teachers was not always warmly received, and from his experiences, he is not the only counselor to have these opinions of teachers. In order for students to gain the most out of their educational experience, the faculty of the school needs to be able to work together fluidly for the best interest of the student. In situations where the relationship is not as strong across the school-wide team, teachers are less likely to make the referral, which continues the downward path of the students' social-emotional health (Baweja et al., 2016). In fact, students who exhibit internal behavior concerns such as ADHD who are not appropriately treated in their youth are more likely to exhibit delinquent behaviors in their adult life and are at risk for health concerns such as alcohol abuse (Walkley & Cox, 2003; Williams et al., 2007). Because of these risk factors for already-at-risk students, the addition of counselors and teachers beginning their collaboration at the university and pre-service level could be a beneficial practice for schools. The attitude seen in the interviews where counselors should counsel, and teachers should teach reflect a lack of understanding for the others' profession and involvement with the students. Adding more structures to the school system for teachers and counselors to work together for students and continue their education of the needs of their student through both a trauma informed and a

culturally responsive lens would allow for these relationships to grow and the ability to help students to become stronger (Beesly, 2004; Sink, 2008)

Restorative Justice Training

One major piece missing from the conversation is how punishment through not earning positive reinforcement is not teaching the student how to accomplish these behavior goals. Another missing element shows that these behavior goals are not normative across the board and often punish students simply because of their lack of adherence to cultural norms outside of their own, or in the lens of trauma, for not putting the expectations of others before their own needs.

Kuypers (2011), published *The Zones of Regulation* as a tool for students to recognize their emotions and learn regulation mechanisms to cope with the varying emotions they may carry throughout the day. The Zones of Regulation works with Trauma-Informed Practices with structure from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). These programs work in tandem with restorative justice-lensed school cultures. In a restorative justice-minded school, the focus is shifted away from changing the behavior through reward and punishment and focused on understanding the root and the behavior and the steps to take in order to mend relationships and take steps to grow into a responsible and accountable citizen. Restorative Justice programs can be used to help with emergent situations, or it can be implemented across a whole school to build a community and climate of trust and inclusion (Schiff, 2018). Where in this project, the counselor deemed himself a solution-oriented counselor and the points were used to provide immediate feedback of the outward behavior, using restorative practices would allow for the root of the outward behavior to be discussed in a safe and nurturing environment so that students could grow and develop healthy strategies for

managing and regulating the emotions. This also allows teachers and school personnel to better understand their students and the experiences they bring with them to the classroom.

The Use of PBIS in Schools

Culturally responsive teaching, restorative justice models, and individualized supports are beneficial for student well-being and student growth in understanding and managing their emotions. PBIS, on the other hand, is a school-wide model that is blanketed across the entire student population in the hopes of reaching 80% of the students in their adherence to the school expectations. With this 80% of students being "reached" by the Tier 1 interventions in PBIS, the reaching is more closely aligned with compliance than growth and understanding of the structure around them. In this study, students were awarded points for meeting the expectations of the school. The participants discussed the lack of clarity around the expectations and the discrepancies of the expectations amongst different teachers and places within the school building. One approach to mending the gap between PBIS and culturally responsive teaching would be to have a culturally responsive framework melded into the PBIS system of the school. This, however, would not be feasible with the tiered structure and school-wide expectations that are embedded into PBIS. Culturally responsive teaching is ever changing and needs to include all voices in the school community, included students and parents. If the PBIS standards and expectations are school wide, are they truly responsive to the entire school community? Based on the data presented in this study and the literature behind the PBIS program, I believe it is not attainable to run both a PBIS program and a culturally responsive framework with restorative justice approaches to student behavior and social-emotional well-being. Moving forward, I suggest that schools work towards a culturally responsive model that uses restorative justice in order for teachers and the school community to better understand and grow with their students.

By understanding each other culturally, there is more understanding of students and how each student can be successful. With restorative justices approaches in schools, students are able to work through conflict in their day and their school relationships in a healthy and productive way to see and repair any harm that has been caused.

Limitations

I have identified three limitations of this study. First, the study was situated within a specific area of rural Appalachia. Though there may be similarities between other rural regions of Appalachia and even in other non-rural and non-Appalachian regions of the United States, the voices highlighted through discussion of their own experience exist in a specific location. This information is highlighting the needs of the area but being applied to reaching policy and practical changes across many different settings.

Next, the sample size of participants was small. In addition to the small size of the participant group, the participants disproportionally represented the roles of the school faculty. By using the elementary school guidance counselor, music teacher, and an interventionist, the experiences would differ from that of a classroom teacher because of the different ways students interact by seeing a teacher a few times a week or for a short period daily compared to a classroom teacher who is with the same homeroom for the majority of the day for an entire school year. Though the goal of the study was to highlight the experiences of teachers, the study included the experience of the guidance counselor. This information became valuable to the study because it addressed the lived relationships of the teachers and the counselors through utilizing a school wide behavior program. In future studies regarding teachers' experiences in using behavioral programs in schools, there should be a consideration for a larger sample size and for specifically classroom teachers to be involved in the study to provide a broader

interpretation of experiences. If in future studies there was a mixed sample population of teachers and guidance counselors, this would allow for more investigation into the I-You relationships described above through the use of Dasein in this study.

Lastly, a limit of this study was recognized while collecting data. Initially while reading the WVPBIS website, the formatting and language of the website led me to believe that the schools published on the website were considered "model" schools for the posted school year. When I reached out to WVPBIS to ask a few questions about the identification process of becoming a model school, I was informed that the schools in the study were not model schools, but cohort schools. A cohort school, as mentioned previously, is a school that is officially recognized and trained by WVPBIS to use PBIS. A model school is a school that was nominated themselves after years of implementing PBIS to be used as an example school within the state. After communicating with the coordinator of the training program, she discussed via email that the website was written in a way that it could be construed the schools posted were "Model Schools" instead of "Cohort Schools". Though initially these schools were selected because of their "model" school status, it was equally beneficial to understand this study from the perspective that the focus schools either were actively being observed and trained by WVPBIS or had been during their cohort year.

Future Studies

In concluding this study there are multiple avenues I would like to investigate further to create a stronger understanding of student trauma and equitable practices in schools regarding student behavior. First, I will discuss the need for Restorative Justice Lensed Schools with Restorative Justice training in regard to student trauma. Second, I will discuss studying the

possibilities of the continuation of following students' Social-Emotional Learning needs in the Post-COVID education system.

Restorative Justice-Lensed Practices in Rural Schools

Restorative Justice Practices are an increasingly popular model being used in schools (Schiff, 2018). Though it is increasing in popularity, there are still many schools, specifically in rural areas using punitive and zero-tolerance policies that further the effects of cultural trauma on children. In some ways, the trauma that students have experienced because of their identity is perpetuated in schools in such a way that their behaviors and mannerisms mimic those of veterans suffering from PTSD (Christen-Schneider & Pycroft, 2021). As mentioned previously, many school districts have shifted away from the implementation of PBIS into a community and restorative based system where students are being taught directly how to manage their emotions. Though many schools have begun this process, there is still work to be done and this work cannot be done alongside the incentive and blanket statement programs that are also widely used in the United States. In a recent article from the Washington Post (Meckler, 2022), the author explained that there is pushback towards the implementation of Restorative Justice programs in schools because of its racial and cultural inclusion of all students being linked to the recently controversial idea of Critical Race Theory in schools. By discussing racial trauma that students have experienced, schools implementing these policies are having discussions about race, class, and cultural differences with their students. In some states, these conversations are banned, whether it be discussing emotions and experiences around race, culture, or sexual identity, there is a growing stigma in some areas around these topics. If there is a ban on discussing these topics, restorative juices practices cannot be effectively implemented into the school. Additionally, there are other forms of trauma students may be experiencing that restorative

justice practices can help identify. When looking at the Zones of Regulation, the purpose of

using the Zones is to have students identify the emotions they are experiencing and work towards

goals of understanding and regulating their emotions. When students can understand their

emotions, schools can use restorative practices to create a safe environment and heal.

Post-Covid Social and Emotional Well-Being in Schools

Though the literature is scarce on the post-COVID school situation, there are emerging

studies about the effects that COVID-19 and the lockdowns had on students. "The pandemic and

lockdown world has experienced global economic turn-down which has directly worsened the

pre-existing social inequality" (Singh et. al., p. 4, 2020). School aged children are especially

vulnerable. Singh et. al. (2020) tell us

> The nature and extent of impact on this age group depend on many vulnerability factors
> such as the developmental age, current educational status, having special needs, pre-
> existing mental health condition, being economically under privileged and child/ parent
> being quarantined due to infection or fear of infection (Singh et. al., p. 1, 2020).

Even outside of the school model, there was an increase in mental health needs across the

globe during the lockdowns. Pedrosa et. al., (2020) shares that the uptick in fear of the disease,

the stress of various economic factors on families, and those who had threatening situations in

their home environment such as domestic violence were susceptible to further mental crises

through the pandemic. Just as in West Virginia through Policy 2510, there are school districts

making an effort to incorporate some sort of SEL curriculum into the day. However, these SEL

lessons are not always what is necessary for true guidance and support for students impacted by

trauma. Phelps and Sperry (2020), share concerns that there do not seem to be many efforts by

schools to help students who depend on the school for mental health services. This, compounded

with the added trauma caused by the pandemic itself could cause a ripple effect of lasting mental

health needs across a generation. For example, Singh (2020) noted that school-aged children who

were in confined spaces for long periods of time as they were during the COVID-19 lockdowns were more susceptible to develop ADHD. In addition to the rise in ADHD, these children were also likely to have "experienced disturbed sleep, nightmares, poor appetite, agitation, inattention and separation related anxiety" (Singh et. al., p. 2, 2020). These factors are detrimental to young students, and as we return to school, these factors of stress and trauma must be taken into consideration in addition to the normal academic standards in the classroom.

The school serves as a place of mental health care for many students (Golberstein, Wen, & Miller, 2020), and with the interruption of schools being closed throughout the 2020 and 2021 school years, there has been an increase in the need for and access to youth mental health services (Golberstein, Wen, & Miller, 2020, Singh et. al. 2020). We must continue to find restorative and equitable practices to reach students in the post COVID-19 era.

Conclusion

Childhood Trauma can stem from many different factors. It is recognized in the literature that exposure to Childhood Trauma can cause difficulty in school that can be lasting through adulthood, leading to a variety of long-term health concerns. When schools are primarily focused on controlling the behaviors to meet the expectations of the teachers, the Lifeworlds and experiences of the students are not being met. In today's society with childhood traumatic events continuing to rise, especially with the mental health challenges the COVID-19 pandemic created, there is a need for all schools, especially those in rural environments, to reconsider their behavior plans from teacher-aligned expectations where tangible rewards are earned, to a restorative approach where the root of the behavior is explored to allow the students to learn emotional management strategies and receive the care they need in order to cope with their traumatic experiences in healthy ways. This study uses experiential data from rural teachers to understand

how the school functions as a source of capital gain both in the school community and in the global market with more regard for the white, female, middle class norm rather than accepting and protecting all of our students. From this project, future studies could continue to investigate restorative practices in regard to childhood trauma and the lasting effects of COVID-19 on Social Emotional Learning in Schools.

Acronyms Within the Text

PBIS: Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

TIES: Trauma Informed Elementary School

CBITS: Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools

EBP: Evidence Based Practices

ACE: Adverse Childhood Experience

TIC: Trauma Informed Care

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

ODD: Oppositional Defiant Disorder

ADD: Attention Deficit Disorder

AYP: Adequate Yearly Progress

NAEP: National Assessment of Educational Progress

Appendix A:

Interview Protocol

These interviews will aim to understand the experiences of the teachers in their school and their community. Even though there are multiple questions listed in this protocol, it is important to remember to be flexible during phenomenological interviews to allow for a natural discussion to occur. If the conversation has opened up other avenues of discussion that are critical for the natural attitude to unfold, new questions may be asked. Any new question will be recorded and added to this Appendix.

Interview 1: Establishing a relationship with the participants in the study.

Question 1: Describe to me how you came to be a teacher in this community

Question 2: What is an average day like at your school? Describe a day in your life as an educator.

Question 3: How do you experience your students' personal lives in your classroom?

Question 4: Do you experience your students' lives in any capacity outside of the classroom and in the community? **(Follow Up)** How does this (or doesn't this) happen?

Question 5: What experiences do you have with understanding childhood trauma and stress?

(Allow space and time for follow up questions such as how they were or were not prepared for this.)

Interview 2: Gaining an understanding of how PBIS is used in this setting

Question 1: Describe to me your experiences with PBIS

(Allow time and space for follow up questions after question 1.)

Question 2: Tell me about a time that you felt PBIS was successful in your classroom. What did you experience that made it successful in that moment?

Question 3: Tell me about a time that you felt PBIS was unsuccessful in your classroom. What did you experience that made it unsuccessful in that moment?

Question 4: Describe what kinds of trainings you have had with PBIS? What were these experiences like for you?

Interview 3:. How do teachers experience grit and resiliency in the school with PBIS?

Question 1: are there any other programs or models used in conjunction with pbis in your school? Describe what they are

Question 2 Can you describe to me a time when a student was having a crisis? Be as detailed as you can while eliminating identifying information about the student.

Question 3: How have you experienced using the pillars of PBIS (insert other school frameworks as become available) in helping a student?

Goal- Do you experience the Growth Mindset or themes of grit in your school expectations?

Follow Ups:
What experiences do you have with grit or resiliency in your school, if any?

How does grit and resilience intertwine with PBIS in your school (does it)

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