

# Lesson #4: Common Good Five-Step Case Study Analysis Teacher Packet

**Directions:** Read through each case study carefully and complete the graphic organizer using what you understand about the common good.

Many challenges in society involve being able to see and seek the common good when individuals and/or groups appear to want different things. In the following real-world case studies, students are asked to use the Five-Step Case Study Analysis Method to reflect on how the common good helps us seek the right solution to the problem and how an understanding of and commitment to the common good might rule out particular ways of addressing problems.

## Case Study #1: Paid Family Leave

Today, the vast majority of families have both parents in the workforce, not only for income but also because work is a meaningful, important part of both parents' identities. This creates challenges about how to “balance” work and family, but the most acute challenge is childbirth itself, especially for women. In light of this, many countries in the world have paid family leave laws, such that workers who are going to have or who have recently birthed or adopted a child continue to be paid, even though they are given a leave from work. Thus, in essence, their salary is paid by the work of others—more specifically, by a tax on everyone's earnings that is then distributed to individuals taking a leave for childbirth or adoption and to care for a child.

### Teacher Notes

In this example, it should be easy for the students to see that it is generally good to support people who are raising children and to help them balance work and family. The challenge for students in this example will be articulating the importance of support for those raising children against the fact that the financial support of paid family leave means that a person's salary is paid by the work of others, a tax on everyone's earnings that is then distributed to individuals taking leave for childbirth or adoption. Students will be challenged as to whether or not they think it is fair for working employees to support others who are having children. In order to navigate this challenge, students will need to start thinking of children as a common good as opposed to a *private good*.

It is important to note that for everyone's benefit, a society wants to invest in children collectively. One way this

occurs is through public schools. Everyone, whether they have children or not, pitches in to take care of children's education. Ultimately, whether they have a child or not, everyone has a stake in raising a future generation that will contribute to society. Those contributions will vary widely, so encourage students to recognize that this is not just about economic productivity and exchange; even those with significant disabilities can and do contribute to the common good, as so many families with special-needs children attest. The goal with this example is to have the students see children and supporting people who have children as contributing to the *common good* and not just as achieving a *private good*.

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disabilities can and do contribute to the common good, as so many families with special-needs children attest. The goal with this example is to have the students see children and supporting people who have children as contributing to the common good and not just as achieving a private good.

### **Questions for Discussion** *(to be used after students have completed the Five-Step Case Study analysis)*

- ◆ What is the good being pursued? Why is it a good?
- ◆ What is the particular challenge or tension in pursuing this good?
- ◆ What critical attributes of the common good are being highlighted?
- ◆ Is it fair for working employees to support others who are having children?
- ◆ Are children simply a *private good* or a *common good*?
- ◆ According to the critical attributes of the common good, is paid family leave appropriate?

### ***Step #1: Consider the issues***

What are the central problems or issues involved? Where might there be tension between individuals or groups? Are some issues more or less important?

***Step #2: Consider the perspectives***

Who are the groups of people involved in this case? What is important to each group or person involved? (i.e., what do they value?) Are there issues of inherent dignity involved? Is there a group whose basic needs for human flourishing are not being met?

***Step #3: Consider what you know***

Based on what you have learned about the common good, what details in the case are important? List the critical attributes and explain how each one relates to the scenario. What more would you want to know about the situation presented in the case to make the best decision?

***Step #4: Reflect on the proposed actions(s)***

Some people suggest that paid family leave policies are unfair and force other employees who might not have children to support those who do. Do you think the policy of paid family leave supports the common good? Why or why not?

***Step #5: Consider the potential outcomes***

What are some of the potential benefits of paid family leave? What might be some challenges?

## Case Study #2: China's One-Child Policy

Can a country have too many people? In the 1970s, after experiencing rapid population growth, China became concerned about overpopulation depleting its resources. In 1979, and for many decades thereafter, China instituted a one-child policy under which couples were only allowed to have one child. This policy was instituted to limit the abuse of land, enable the existing population to develop, and preserve family resources for a single child for the next generation; some believe this policy helped to transform the country from a very poor country to a wealthier one. In many ways, China's policy seems to look like a success. But it also relied on extremely high fines for families who did not comply and encouraged large-scale abortion and sterilization.

### Teacher Notes

This case study presents a possible solution to population growth, one that students might be suspicious of. Students might note that this case study serves as a kind of counter to Case Study #1: Paid Family Leave. The challenge, in considering both case studies together, is that if having children is a common good as opposed to a private good, one that we all should support with shared funding, then why shouldn't governments control their populations? Why shouldn't governments exercise some sort of collective control over how many children people can have?

In the first case study students should come to see that parental care for children is a common good, and that shared conditions can and should be established to support that care. This case is more complicated. It challenges students to name the extent to which "shared conditions" may limit family size itself. In other words, in the first case study students should see that societies ought to support the care of children as integral to the common good, while this case study challenges students to weigh the following: if a society ought to support the care of children, should it also have a say in the number of children a family may have?

China's one-child policy arose in the wake of two key factors: one, a widespread concern in the 1970s that world population growth would exceed the planet's natural resources, and two, the economic destruction created by

Mao Zedong's disastrous planning policies in the 1950s and 1960s, which produced widespread famine and death. With the experience of famine vivid in China's memory, the government's new leadership believed that the population needed to be limited if the country was to develop into a more industrialized society. Government officials believed family wealth needed to be consolidated by raising only one child instead of distributing resources over multiple children. With fewer children in a generation, the government reasoned, each child was more likely to receive a full education, find gainful work, and contribute to society.

The teacher may consider showing the short documentary video "[PBS RetroReport Population Bomb: The Overpopulation Theory That Fell Flat](https://www.retroreport.org/video/the-population-bomb/)"<sup>1</sup> on China's one child policy to give students greater context for the case study.

Earlier in the 1970s, the government pursued a voluntary program that urged families to limit births to one child or two at most. Leaders became convinced, however, that a much more stringent program was needed to limit population growth. The one-child policy was enforced in various ways: propaganda, fines, forced (i.e., non-voluntary) implantation of IUDs (Intrauterine devices) after the birth of a woman's first child, and even forced abortions.

<sup>1</sup> Roane, Kit R. and Sarah Weiser. "Population Bomb: The Overpopulation Theory That Fell Flat." RetroReport, October 22, 2019. <https://www.retroreport.org/video/the-population-bomb/>.

Families who sought to evade the rule were punished by very heavy fines and forced abortions. Students should be encouraged to recognize at least three critical attributes: individual duties and responsibilities, inherent dignity, and historical variability and structural consistency. The most obvious issue in the case study is the exercise of individual responsibilities (and rights) of parents.

While China's one-child policy is highly controversial, parents across the globe do have a duty to care for their children to the best of their ability and to make prudent decisions about the spacing and number of their children. They should discern the spacing and number of children based on serious concerns such as family resources, the genuine flourishing of each member of the family, and any other grave considerations, such as psychological or physical health of either parent. In cases such as these parents may avoid intercourse during periods of fertility. A central question in this case study is whether it is within a government's authority to limit family size, and if so, what methods it may leverage to do so. The question of how a government encourages people to have or not have children must account for and may not, under any circumstance, violate the inherent dignity of human beings. A counterfactual example may assist students in their thinking. When governments want to encourage people to have children, they often create policies that act as incentives. The benefits might include things like child tax credits, expanded healthcare and/or childcare subsidies, etc. Such policies are intended to encourage but not coerce people to have children. Those who cannot or prudentially decide that they ought not have additional children for serious reasons are not penalized. Thus such policies do not violate human dignity. The question of how to enforce duties while respecting the inherent dignity of every person is a central issue in this case. The forcible sterilization of women and the widespread practice of abortion, even forced abortion, clearly violate the inherent dignity of women and children.

It is important to note that the question of historical variability is also relevant in this case study. Many other countries also sought to limit population growth, but used different, less aggressive means to do so. Some countries lowered birth rates through economic growth and promoting women's education, which often leads to their having fewer children and delaying childbirth. The teacher might ask students how they would evaluate the reasons for adopting less or more strict means in different contexts or if there are certain means that should never be used.

In particular, students should consider to what extent reproduction is a personal right as opposed to something that should be controlled by the government for the common good. This gets to questions of inherent dignity, and specifically about what exactly are the basic claims or rights that constitute such dignity. Students might be shown some of the **United Nations' statements<sup>2</sup>**, which insist on the right of parents to freely choose the "number and spacing" of their children—even if the parents should also take into account "responsibilities toward the community" (i.e., common good).

Students may suggest that the government shouldn't be involved in one's personal decision to have children (i.e., in relation to contraception or abortion). This is a common claim, but students should be reminded that the issue is what sort of involvement in decisions about children the government should have. For example, governments mandate child safety laws such as car seats, require schooling of children, intervene in cases of parental abuse, and the like. Governments can create policies that either support or deter abortion. They heavily regulate adoption. Encourage the students to articulate more clearly how they think the government *should be involved and why*, with an eye toward the government's role in supporting the common good of all.

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations. "Reproductive Rights." Accessed 2021. <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/theme/rights/index.asp>

In regards to abortion: The role of the government is to protect the life of its people. This is why there are extensive federal laws about the murder or attempted murder of individuals. Thus the ruling on abortion, whether or not a government says abortion is legal or illegal, depends upon the decision made by the government as to whether or not an unborn child is a human person that deserves protection under the law. U.S. law is not consistent in this regard. In some cases an unborn child is considered a legal person (i.e., if someone murders a pregnant woman, he or she can be charged with double homicide, for the death of the mother and the death of the unborn child) while in other cases (i.e., elective abortion) an unborn child is not considered a legal person. Whether it says it explicitly or not, a government under which abortion is legal has made the decision that the unborn child is NOT a human person who deserves to be protected by law. It is important to consider here that in the history of the United States of America, there have been times when both Indigenous peoples and Black peoples have not been considered full persons who deserved the same protection under the law as white people.

Finally, students might grapple with the question of whether the one-child policy actually achieves the supposed common good that it purports to achieve. In other words, while one task is to specifically name the common good, a further task is evaluating whether the particular actions or policies actually contribute to it. This is more difficult to address because it gets into the nuts and bolts of whether the one-child policy benefited China and how. A full analysis would need to ask questions such as: does population reduction really achieve the common good, especially of economic growth, or is there something else at play? Were there unintended consequences (social, political, cultural, economic) of the government's actions? Students will not resolve that with the information here, but they should be challenged to discern the difference between a *claim* that a given action supports the common good and what information might be needed to understand whether the claim is actually *valid*. China claimed to limit family size for the common good of the country, but this claim cannot necessarily be taken at face value.<sup>3</sup>

### Questions for Discussion (to be used after students have completed the Five-Step Case Study analysis)

- ◆ What is the good that is pursued by China's one-child policy? Why is it a good?
- ◆ What is the particular challenge with the way in which the Chinese government pursued this good?
- ◆ What critical attributes of the common good are being highlighted?
- ◆ Is it fair for governments to set limits on the number of children a person can have?
- ◆ Why is China's policy, which claims to advance the common good, actually opposed to the common good?

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<sup>3</sup>Teachers may want to review "Unto the Least of These My Brethren: U.S. Population Control Policy" for my information on Church teaching. In addition, for more information on some of the unforeseen consequences of China's one-child policy see "The ghost children: In the wake of China's one-child policy, a generation is lost." in The Globe and Mail by Nathan Vanderklippe, March 2015.

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### *Step #1: Consider the issues*

What are the problems or issues involved in China's one-child policy? What is the tension between individuals and the government? Are some concerns more or less important? Are some more or less urgent? What issues would you prioritize based on your understanding of the common good?

### *Step #2: Consider the perspectives*

Who is involved in this case? What is important to individuals and what is important to the government? (i.e., what do they value?) Are there issues of inherent dignity involved? Is there a group whose basic needs for human flourishing are not being met?



***Step #3: Consider what you know***

Based on what you have learned about the common good, what details in the case are important? List the critical attributes and explain how each one relates to the scenario. What more would you want to know about the situation presented in the case to make the best decision?

***Step #4: Reflect on the proposed actions(s)***

In your own words, describe the one-child policy. If children are a common good, does the government have the authority to limit family size? Is China's one-child policy (which was recently changed to a "two-child policy") consistent with the common good? How do you see decisions about family size and population interacting with the common good? What might you propose instead?

*Step #5: Consider the potential outcomes*

Given the proposal of China's one-child policy, what are the potential outcomes (economic, cultural, environmental, familial, etc.)? If you are familiar with the impact of China's one-child policy, what were some of its negative consequences? Did this policy achieve the common good?

### Case Study #3: Abortion

There is widespread agreement on the importance of men and women being equal in society. But a key area of dispute has to do with women's reproductive rights. Can the common good be achieved, some ask, if women do not control their own bodies? On the other hand, others argue, if we mandate that parents protect children in many ways (e.g., through child safety seats, through mandatory schooling laws, through required vaccinations, etc.), should a pregnant woman be allowed to abort that child?

#### Teacher Notes

This raises a challenging issue. Students are going to be forced to recognize that laws can be instituted that protect children and this is consistent with the common good. If this is the case, then students will need to grapple with why we would exclude the unborn child from such protection. There are likely two initial challenges to face here. The first is that some students do not think about abortion as a common good issue. They consider it a “private” decision. Those students should be pressed to recognize the ways we consider the proper care and protection of children as an essential aspect of the common good. The second is that some students will maintain that the fetus is not a child. If possible, and gently, students should be prodded to think in terms of basic inherent dignity and rights. Does the unborn child (fetus) have dignity? Why or why not? Do pregnant women have responsibilities to care for, protect, and do good for the unborn child (fetus)? If women do have these duties (it will be hard to deny them), why would they be so important in some cases and completely disregarded in others? The point of these questions is to help students come to see that care for children is clearly a common good concern, one that we ordinarily view as quite important—and that it is anomalous to exclude only unwanted unborn children from this commitment. Thus, students are invited to see that the protection of the unborn child is a common good concern.

At the same time, students should come to recognize that if it is a common good concern, then there need to be shared conditions that make it possible for mothers (and fathers) to have and raise children (or to consider placing them for adoption) without seriously disadvantaging them in society.

In terms of the common good, there are duties that individuals have toward pregnant women (to support them and their unborn children) that correlate to claims about an unborn child's right to life. Students should be invited to think about what sorts of shared conditions might be needed to achieve a society that does not have recourse to abortion.

These two basic realizations—(1) that it is reasonable to think about the protection of unborn children as a common good issue and (2) that it is necessary to consider the shared conditions which would support these unborn children—are sufficient to achieve the goal of this example. It is important to note that students may bring up issues (e.g., about personal responsibility, the choice to have sex) and particularly challenging cases (e.g., about cases of rape and sexual assault or about cases where a mother's health is in danger) that are very important, but that would be difficult to handle well in the limited space available. Students should once again be reminded of the complexity of achieving the common good, while also be reminded that in the vast majority of cases, the core issue in abortion is the question of the basic rights and duties of individuals and society.

**Questions for Discussion** *(to be used after students have completed the Five-Step Case Study analysis)*

- ◆ What is the good being pursued? Why is it a good?
- ◆ What is the particular challenge or tension in pursuing this good?
- ◆ What critical attributes of the common good are being highlighted?
- ◆ Is it fair for working employees to support others who are having children?

***Step #1: Consider the issues***

What are the challenges or issues? What is the tension between individuals or groups? Are some issues more or less important? Are some more or less urgent? What issues would you prioritize based on your understanding of the common good?

***Step #2: Consider the perspectives***

Who are the people or groups involved in this case? What is important to each group or person? (i.e., what do they value?) What do they consider most important? Are there issues of inherent dignity involved? Is there a group whose basic needs for human flourishing are not being met?

***Step #3: Consider what you know***

Based on what you have learned about the common good, what details in the case are important? List the critical attributes and explain how each one relates to the scenario. What more would you want to know about the issues involved in the case to make the best decision?

***Step #4: Reflect on the proposed actions(s)***

Propose a course of action in your own words. Explain how the proposed solution advances the common good (be sure to address all critical attributes)?

***Step #5: Consider the potential outcomes***

Given each of the proposed solutions, what are the potential outcomes? How does your proposal to reconcile the two goods achieve the common good? What might be some challenges?

## Final Unit Assessment

Choose ONE case study from the following pages.

Complete the case study analysis.

### *Step #1: Consider the issues*

What are the challenges or issues? Identify any possible tensions between individuals or groups. Are some issues more or less important? Are some more or less urgent? Are the issues acute or chronic? Are some root issues that cause others? What challenges or issues would you prioritize based on your understanding of the common good?

### *Step #2: Consider the perspectives*

Who are the people or groups involved in this case? What is important to each person or group involved? (i.e., what do they value?) What do they consider most important? Are there issues of inherent dignity involved? Is there a group whose basic needs for human flourishing are not being met?

*Step #3: Consider what you know*

Based on what you have learned about the common good, what details in the case are important? List the critical attributes and explain how each one relates to the situation described. What more would you want to know about the situation presented in the case to make the best decision? Is there additional information from research or other sources that would equip you to propose more powerful actions for addressing the situation in the case? If so, what?

Read the article(s) for your case. What new information did you learn? How does this help you think about the challenges or issues involved? How can this help you propose a course of action that promotes the common good?



***Step #4: Reflect on the proposed actions(s)***

Given your analysis, what would you recommend be done to address this situation in a way that promotes the common good (you should consider each of the critical attributes of the common good in your recommendation)?

***Step #5: Consider the potential outcomes***

Based on your proposed course of action, reflect on the following questions: What are the potential outcomes? How does the proposed action achieve the common good? What might be some challenges?

## Final Unit Assessment Case Study Options

### 1 The COVID Crisis and Homelessness

The recent COVID crisis has brought economic challenges, especially for people who have few resources and live paycheck-to-paycheck. In one city, a **homeless camp**<sup>4</sup> sprang up in a park near the center of the city. The city was concerned about its impact on businesses, and “temporarily” moved the tent city to a small park in a residential neighborhood. Residents of the neighborhood understood the challenges but became concerned about unsafe conditions, fights, drug dealing, and other issues that arose around the camp. The residents were particularly concerned about the safety of their children, who were used to visiting one another’s houses, riding bikes to the park, and the like.

How should this situation be resolved to achieve the common good? To help you analyze this scenario, take some time to read the following articles. The first one describes the reality of homelessness, how it plays out for different individuals, and the various reasons people find themselves to be homeless. The second one describes resident concerns when a homeless camp moved to their neighborhood.

**One Day, One City, No Relief: 24 hours inside San Francisco’s homelessness crisis**<sup>5</sup>

**Viewpoint: Looking for leadership on South Bend’s homelessness problem**<sup>6</sup>

#### Teacher Notes

In an advanced case study such as this one, students are asked to consider a multi-faceted and already existing problem that impacts the common good. We live in a society that does not effectively deal with a certain subset of the population because of the population’s challenges (i.e., lack of family, friendships, and networks of institutional and social support, mental illness, experiences of trauma and abuse, etc.). That is to say, many in this population already have a problem that creates other problems, such as chronic homelessness. Certainly there are cases in which homelessness is a temporary condition, for instance, a single mom with kids who loses her job, can’t make mortgage or rental payments, and ends up living in the car without a job.

But for the majority of individuals experiencing homelessness, it is a chronic condition, requiring creative community solutions that involve continued relationships of support to address it. It is difficult to simply throw bureaucratic resources at the challenge of homelessness. But there also need to be certain kinds of services that a personalist community cannot provide, such as substance abuse and mental health counseling. In order for students to more fully appreciate some of the complexities of homelessness, they should read the article “**One Day, One City, No Relief.**”

<sup>4</sup> Parrott, Jeff. “South Bend homeless tent camp neighbors still frustrated with lack of action from city.” South Bend Tribune, July 9, 2020. <https://sbheritage.org/south-bend-homeless-tent-camp-neighbors-still-frustrated-with-lack-of-action-from-city/>

<sup>5</sup> Fagan, Kevin. “One Day, One City, No Relief: 24 hours inside San Francisco’s homelessness crisis.” San Francisco Chronicle, July 31, 2019. <https://projects.sfchronicle.com/sf-homeless/24-hours-homelessness/>.

<sup>6</sup> Wilson, Mary Ann and Ben. “Viewpoint: Looking for leadership on South Bend’s homeless problem.” South Bend Tribune, July 5, 2020. <https://www.southbendtribune.com/story/opinion/2020/07/05/viewpoint-looking-for-leadership-on-south-bends-homeless-problem/116068270/>

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This resource documents 24 hours in San Francisco among the homeless population, giving students the opportunity to learn about different individuals who are homeless and their particular realities. Through their reflection, it is hoped that students will deploy the critical attributes of the common good in their assessment and suggested actions. First and foremost, the homeless have dignity and their basic rights must be respected. One cannot solve this problem by disregarding their dignity. They also have duties to act in certain ways—not engage in fights, drug activity, and other kinds of illegal activities. It is appropriate for students to think about what one should do in a situation when people are not doing their duties. Students should also consider the

shared conditions, such as safety, that can bring the residents of the neighborhood and the homeless together to participate in having a good neighborhood. In principle at least both the homeless and residents of the neighborhoods want safety, basic access to food and water, sanitary conditions, and expect the society, in the form of local, state, and federal government, to provide those. The question thus becomes, how can a community achieve the shared conditions that everyone needs?

## 2 Highway Construction

The construction of the interstate highway system beginning in the 1950s was one of the largest social programs of the 20th century. Building large highways to move people and trucks (and, it was presumed, military vehicles) across open country was a big project, but fairly easy. However, when it came to constructing these massive highways in large cities, there were serious difficulties. Whose neighborhoods would be split up and even destroyed by superhighways? Whose neighborhoods would be left alone? The story of racial injustice is now written in our cities. In Washington, D.C., wealthy white neighborhoods kept highway construction out of their neighborhoods. In Baltimore and Philadelphia, poor, predominantly minority neighborhoods were leveled for the construction of highways. In St. Paul, Minnesota, the main highway was built right through Rondo, the only historically African-American neighborhood in the city. In Chicago, interstates were strategically coordinated with massive housing projects, so as to protect white neighborhoods (on one side of the Dan Ryan expressway) from the Black neighborhoods and miles of new high-rise slums (on the other side).

Even more, the interstate system encouraged workers to move out to far-flung suburbs and drive for work or entertainment using newly constructed highways—leaving behind city neighborhoods, made invisible by highway construction, to decline. This cycle helped create “white flight” from the cities into more economically prosperous, less diverse suburbs.

Should these interstate highways have been built? How did the building of the interstate highway system try to advance the common good? What common good? Could they have better served the common good? How? And what are ways we might address the effects of the system now to promote the common good of all?

Read the following articles that help you see the reality of highways in America, how their construction affected different communities, and one solution to the divides created by highways.

**[The Role of Highways in American Poverty](#)**<sup>7</sup>

**[Repairing a Severed Connection](#)**<sup>8</sup>

### Teacher Notes

This example highlights two things. The first is that large-scale social projects have many, many different effects at both the national and local levels—and so they really do present challenges to imagining how they serve (or don't serve) the common good. This case study should prompt students to think about what the country would be like without highways. Some may have experience with parts of cities that have few highways (perhaps not

enough), in which case, the traffic is particularly bad on the highways that do exist and the surface streets are slow and clogged. Students should also consider how highways support rapid truck transportation and are essential for delivering materials to factories, warehouses, and stores. The key point here is that (a) the equity concerns will likely be salient, but (b) the alternatives (such as running the highways right through wealthy neighborhoods or

<sup>7</sup> Semuels, Alana. “The Role of Highways in American Poverty.” *The Atlantic*, March 18, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/03/role-of-highways-in-american-poverty/474282/>

<sup>8</sup> MKSK. “Repairing a severed connection to a historic neighborhood by celebrating its past, present, and future.” 2020. <https://www.mkskstudios.com/projects/i70-i71-long-street-bridge>

parks—or simply not having highways through cities) will also seem bad or impossible. They should understand that a laudable large-scale common good objective does not mean we ought to simply implement it at the local level without due consideration.

The second thing this case study highlights is that something like a highway system is already built—that is, we cannot pretend to begin again from square one. Political scientists call this *path dependence*. We cannot simply go back to a time before highways and interstates. Therefore, the possibility of future outcomes depends on the paths taken to the present situation. So the challenge is for students to consider what can be done now to fix the problem or at least some of its effects. There are some different examples of this:

- ◆ Boston’s “big dig” put the highway underground (at great expense),
- ◆ San Francisco and Milwaukee have removed parts of their highways,

- ◆ Syracuse, New York is considering tearing down parts of its highway through the city<sup>9</sup>
- ◆ Columbus, Ohio has constructed a bridge and cultural wall to span the previously divided neighborhoods, and
- ◆ in Chicago the high-rise housing projects are all torn down and residents are theoretically spread out in more humane housing options in neighborhoods across the city.

The flight of the wealthy has been offset in some places (and not others) by a state-level approach to school funding, such that wealthier districts basically subsidize poorer districts. Other cities have built those massive sound walls along interstates, so as to make it less unattractive and noisy to live there.

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<sup>9</sup> Semuels, Alana. “Highways Destroyed American’s Cities Can tearing them down bring revitalization?” The Atlantic, November 25, 2015. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/11/highways-destroyed-americas-cities/417789/>

### 3 Student Discipline

Schools must be places where students and teachers feel safe and secure to teach and learn. Every school must have measures in place to address students who threaten the safety of other students and teachers or otherwise disrupt class. But they must maintain a balance between ensuring a safe environment and addressing the needs of the offending student. A student is frequently late to class. He rarely has his homework completed and thus cannot contribute to class discussions. In addition, he is often disruptive and disrespectful to his peers and teacher. In the hallways and during recess, he is physically and verbally aggressive with other students. What many of his peers do not know is that he has had a very difficult childhood. He has been in the foster care system since the age of seven because his mom passed away and his father was physically and emotionally abusive.

How should the administration respond to this student's actions in a way that promotes the common good, allowing for students and teachers to learn safely while also upholding the dignity of the disruptive student and promoting the flourishing of all?

To help you analyze this scenario, take some time to read the following articles and watch the video.

**[The Unintended Consequences of Taking a Hard Line on School Discipline](#)**<sup>10</sup>

**[Restorative Circles: Creating a Safe Environment for Students to Reflect](#)**<sup>11</sup>

**[What the Heck is Restorative Justice?](#)**<sup>12</sup>

#### Teacher Notes

There is no way to manage the common good of a school without some form of disciplinary system, but there are many debates about how to do so in ways that are consistent with the common good. In this case, students are asked to ponder how a school ought to respond to a student who consistently disrupts the ability of other students to learn in a peaceful environment and threatens their safety in a way that promotes the good of the school, which includes upholding the dignity of the disruptive student.

One of the key elements of fostering the common good is having each individual perform their duties in relation to the group. When individuals, such as a disruptive student, neglect those duties, we face challenging choices

about how to respond. Inevitably, some form of penalty or punishment must be attached to repeated misbehavior and disruption, if only to allow others in the group to continue in their pursuit of the common good. Yet a person who doesn't do their duties still needs the common good, and is often still meant to be a part of the group—the society, the family, the school. Moreover, acts of punishment must respect everyone's inherent dignity.

Students might make an analogy between a well-functioning school and the family. The family is a miniature version of society. Parents have the duty to correct, and sometimes to punish, their children when they err. If children don't have some kind of system of justice within the family that holds

<sup>10</sup> Haberman, Clyde. "The Unintended Consequences of Taking a Hard Line on School Discipline." The New York Times, October 2, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/03/us/the-unintended-consequences-of-taking-a-hard-line-on-school-discipline.html>

<sup>11</sup> Edutopia. "Restorative Circles: Creating a Safe Environment for Students to Reflect." February 5, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-RZYSTJAAo>

<sup>12</sup> Wolpert-Gawron, Heather. "What the Heck is Restorative Justice?" Edutopia, October 17, 2016. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/what-heck-restorative-justice-heather-wolpert-gawron>.

## TEACHING HUMAN DIGNITY

family members accountable, relationships will soon break down. In recognizing the dignity of the child, punishment must always take into account a child's particular capabilities at their stage of development. For instance, a parent might not put a two-year-old in an hour-long time out because the child of that age does not have the ability to sit still for that long. Additionally, the ultimate goal of punishment is instructional. That is, in the case of a child, it is meant to teach the child that their actions affect other people and have consequences. Another analogy might be sports. Most sports need some sort of referee or umpire who calls penalties, particularly those sports that are high contact.

Each family member or player has a duty to respect the dignity of the other players and the rules of the game . If they don't uphold their duty then there must be some sort of system consistent with the common good where they are penalized. Punishment must not be too excessive on the one side or so insignificant that it is ineffective on the other side.

Traditionally, enforcement of duties on students has occurred through a progressive system of discipline. A student may simply be reprimanded by a teacher at first, and if that does not work the student may be sent to the

principal's office, where the student has a record and is met with increasing punishment in response to increasing misbehavior. Ordinarily, the traditional system looks a lot like how we deal with punishment in the society as a whole.

Some have criticized the traditional system, especially because many students who act out in school are dealing with larger personal situations that the simple progressive disciplinary system ignores. But everyone recognizes that there must be a system of some kind. Schools are beginning to understand that zero-tolerance policies for students who act out and/or are violent to other students are not the most appropriate way forward. Instead, they are beginning to adopt trauma-informed practices and policies that balance the rights and needs of all their students—both the offended and the offender. These practices can better address students who are disadvantaged already (traumatized, neglected, abused, etc.). In order to ensure the safety of their classmates, the offending students may need to be removed from the immediate environment, or have the option to remove themselves to a designated space without punishment. They may also need space and time to process emotions, step away from a situation, and check-in with an adult or trusted mentor.

## 4 Environmental Protection

Protecting the environment is critically important for our shared life together, but rules that protect the environment have costs. It costs money, for example, to manufacture goods in ways that are environmentally-sensitive, dispose of waste properly, and not pollute the air or water. Because of these costs, many companies have moved factories to other places in the world where there are fewer environmental protections. This means workers in countries with stronger environmental protections lose their jobs, while the pollution of the Earth continues—just in some other part of the world.

Should companies move their factories to other countries in the world with fewer environmental restrictions? Should the United States loosen its environmental regulations so that more workers can be employed here? How do lack of environmental regulations affect workers and communities? How should this situation be resolved to achieve the common good?

To help you analyze this scenario, take some time to read the following articles.

**When Some US Firms Move Production Overseas, They also Offshore Their Pollution**<sup>13</sup>

**The Effects of Global Warming on Jobs: 80 Million Fewer Jobs**<sup>14</sup>

**What Impact is Climate Change Having on Jobs?**<sup>15</sup>

### Teacher Notes

This case study highlights the challenges that arise when two goods appear to conflict with one another, in this case manufacturing businesses and jobs vs. strong environmental regulations. Some argue that the United States should loosen environmental regulations so that more workers can be employed here. These may harm the environment, but the environmental damage is happening anyway and more jobs means more economic activity, which can be used effectively to mitigate environmental damage. If we have a stronger economy, the argument goes, we will have the economic resources to clean up the environment. On the other hand, others argue that it is better to protect the environment here, which can help people's health, and that we should find people cleaner jobs while trying to persuade other countries to adopt green manufacturing. There are two different goods

at stake. First, there is the good of having a robust and healthy economy for all types of workers and their different skills. Second, there is the good of the environment. Students are challenged to recognize that both things are valuable. This isn't an argument that is easy to work out in simple slogans like "we should all care for our common home—the earth." If businesses collapse or relocate, people will lose their jobs and that hurts them, their families, and their communities. On the other hand, a lack of environmental regulation not only harms the environment, but also the very people who work for manufacturing businesses, who suffer the most from localized environmental pollution. Both the environment and economic stability are real common goods. This case study ought to elicit the realization that pursuing the common good does not mean choosing either one or the

<sup>13</sup> Zhou, Yue Maggie. "When Some US Firms Move Production Overseas, They also Offshore Their Pollution." 2017, The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/when-some-us-firms-move-production-overseas-they-also-offshore-their-pollution-75371>.

<sup>14</sup> Morning Future. "The effects of global warming on jobs: 80 million fewer jobs." September 23, 2019. <https://www.morningfuture.com/en/2019/09/23/warming-global-loss-job/>

<sup>15</sup> Evans, John. "What impact is climate change having on jobs?" December 8, 2015, World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/12/what-impact-is-climate-change-having-on-jobs/>



other—either the environment or economic stability—but rather requires identifying ways of proceeding that promote both economic and environmental health, such as virtuous companies that manage to reconcile care of the environment and economic stability.