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Principals' Beliefs and Attitudes About Social and Emotional Learning: A Grounded Theory Study

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PRINCIPALS' BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL LEARNING: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

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In loving memory of my daddy, my hero, Mr. Willie E. Jones.

Always missing and loving you!!

Your Baby Girl

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Principals are the gatekeepers of their school environment. Therefore, their beliefs and attitudes about social and emotional learning (SEL) will influence their staff, students and parents. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore school principals' beliefs and attitudes about SEL. Researchers have focused on SEL's success as it relates to academic achievement, but little is known about the adults' roles in effective SEL integration. Findings from this study may inform how administrators (e.g., school system superintendents) structure training for principals to acquire skills in influencing and integrating programs into the overall school climate. The findings may also be used to assist program developers by providing key strategies that principals feel are needed to support their efforts to champion SEL adoption. The methodology used for data collection was semi-structured interviews with eight principals located in urbanized areas across Louisiana. The themes that emerged from this study included: lack of passion for SEL, lack of understanding of SEL, social influences on SEL school integration, and principal presence and staff proficiency in modeling and implementing. The lack of understanding of an SEL definition was a major barrier in this study making it impossible for a theory to emerge. However, valuable information was garnered. Late majority adopter principals exhibited an overall lack of passion for SEL integration into the school in contrast to early adopters who were passionate about SEL integration. Late majority adopter principals possessed neutral to no attitudes in contrast to early adopter principals who possessed positive attitudes regarding SEL. Principals have influence on everyone involved in the system, but do not seem to be easily influenced by others. Overall, being visible and accessible to everyone, providing adequate professional development for teachers, and boosting teacher competence

were of importance to all principals included in this study. Finally, a few other notable ideas

materialized relative to principals, students and the overall school environment.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The education mission of schools can be reached most efficiently when efforts of academic, social and emotional learning are integrated (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Scwab-Stone, & Shriver, 1997). Simply put, social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process where in order to achieve important life tasks, children develop and improve their capacity to incorporate thinking, feeling, and behaving (Elias, 2004). SEL focuses on characteristics that are necessary to be successful not only in school, but in life all together. Children display competence in several ways. Managing emotions if critical as is having strong relationships. Social awareness as well as good decisions complement this (Elias et al., 1997; Payton, Weissberg, Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Schellinger, & Pachan, 2008). Age range consideration must be given to the developmental tasks anticipated within the key components of SEL (Denham & Brown, 2010). These developmental tasks serve as important benchmarks to evaluate a child's SEL growth (Denham & Brown, 2010).

Social and personal outcomes are heavily influenced by social and emotional learning which also play an important role in improving performances of children academically (Elias, et al., 2003). Improved academic outcomes, school connectedness, and better discipline are all improved outcomes that research suggests participants of SEL programming have (Denham & Brown, 2010; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, Walberg, 2004). Structured opportunities can be provided through curriculum-based lessons for skill instruction and practice. That component coupled with student self-monitoring and external prompts by adults can aid in the use of the skills (Elias, 2004). The acquisition and use of SEL skills is critical. In order for SEL skill development to be noticeable to children, it must be clear, visible, and consistent. For maximum success, it should

be fully integrated into the school day (Elias, 2004). According to Elias, et al., (1997), Guideline 17 states "a caring, supportive, and challenging classroom and school climate is most conducive to effective SEL teaching and learning" (p. 75). The entire ecological support system reinforcing the use of these skills aids in yielding positive student outcomes and significant behavior changes (Elias, M.J, 2004). Multiyear, designed classroom instructions of SEL that include real life application scenarios and an emphasis on school systems and climate are the most helpful (Elias, O'Brien, & Weissberg, 2006).

Since schools are a mainstay of society, have access to basically all children, and have the responsibility of educating students to become responsible, contributing citizens, they are the best venue to promote academic, social and emotional development (Elias, 2004). Schools are the primary location where children learn how to exist in social environments, and where children begin to negotiate their position in such environments (Aviles, Anderson, & Davila, 2006). Schools are important because of their place in the community structure and the amount of time that youth spend there (Baker, Dilly, Aupperlee, Patil, 2003; Aviles, et al., 2006). A child's home and community life follows them to school. More and more administrators and teachers are faced with the need to implement new programs in the schools to address specific issues, but often times without having the proper foundations and trainings to do so.

Given this context of schools, it stands to reason that schools are only as good as their principals. Whether principals realize it or not, their beliefs and attitudes are driving the motivation of their staff and students. The school principal's impact on the setting is important for a student's academic achievement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, Wahlstrom, 2004). There are many factors that affect leadership behavior such as school district size, socioeconomic status of the students, pressures from the staff, district and/or community, and the principal's own

2

beliefs (Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990). Haberman (2001) insists today's administrators, especially those in urban settings, must evolve from white collar administrators into community workers. This is due to the expanded responsibilities of the job. Berkowitz, Johnston and Pelster (2012) stated,

> Teaching harder to the test is not a path to robust sustained success. Creating a caring school climate that nurtures social, emotional and moral competencies and supports the motives and skills necessary for productive work (during and after schooling) instead is the true path to success in school and life (p 12).

As the school leader, principal relationships intensely and directly affect teachers' attitudes, which is a factor affecting the schooling climate (Price, 2012). Those principals that have more autonomy form stronger relationships with staff (Price, 2012). Principals who will affect change are those that can establish a trusting school environment with all involved (Byrk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, Easton, 2010). The leader of a school has the greatest influence on school culture (Berkowitz, Johnston & Pelster, 2012).

Principals must be willing to rearrange structures and relations to accomplish sincere and viable change (Elias, O'Brien, & Weissberg, 2006). Transformational leadership is one way in which principals can be innovative and empower teachers (Marks & Printy, 2003). With transformational leadership principals involve teachers in the dialogue and decision-making to enlarge the leadership capacity of the school (Marks & Printy, 2003). The transformative leadership approach can be an important aspect of integrating SEL into schools. While there are several transformational actions, Elias, Obrien and Weissberg (2006) consider the following non-negotiable: "leading with vision and courage, beginning and integrating efforts schoolwide, and implementing with integrity" (p. 11). Transformational leadership lacks a clear focus on curriculum (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998), but when transformational principals accept their

joint instructional role with teachers, an integrated form of leadership happens (Marks & Printy, 2003).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore school principals' beliefs and attitudes about SEL. From a theoretical standpoint, this study may contribute to a model of principals' beliefs and attitudes about SEL. Ultimately, we know that beliefs and attitudes drive behavior and behavior drives environment (Bandura, 1997; Ajzen, Czasch, Flood, 2009). Practical implications of this study may include informing how administrators (e.g., school system superintendents) structure training for principals to acquire skills in influencing and integrating programs into the overall school climate. Other program designers (e.g., contract trainers, Cooperative Extension youth development educators) may also benefit from insight provided by the study into key strategies for supporting principals' efforts to champion SEL adoption.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1) What past experiences influence the way principals view SEL?

2) What positive and negative judgments do principals make about SEL?

3) What social supports would cause principals to integrate and champion SEL?

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Schools are an important setting for social and emotional learning (SEL) and development. "SEL programs and teaching strategies can be effective when implemented comprehensively and with fidelity" (Snyder, Vuchinic, Acock, Washburn, Flay, 2012, p. 12). When there is a lack of strong leadership and a well-organized and purposed implementation,

programs often become more of a nuisance than an advantage (Greenberg, Obrien, Zins, Resnik, & Elias, 2003). Support of administration is the key in adopting and implementing an effective, sustaining SEL climate. School leadership such as principals and program coordinators can influence SEL implementation significantly by setting school priorities, setting a clear vision, securing funding and resources, allotting time for training, and much more (Durlak &Dupre, 2008). If there is a clear awareness of school principals' beliefs and attitudes about SEL, knowing how they will act when implementing the principles and practices of SEL is more likely. While there are some practical guides that list actions that principals should take when integrating SEL into schools, those guides do not explore the link between principal's beliefs and attitudes and the requisite actions they are expected to take (Elias et al., 1997; Greenberg, Domitrovich, Graczyk, Zins, 2005). As such, this shortage makes this study relevant and timely.

Overview of Methodology

I conducted a grounded theory study focused on principals' perceptions of their beliefs and attitudes about social and emotional learning. The goal of this grounded theory study was for a theory to emerge from the data that may contribute to a model of principals' beliefs and attitudes about SEL. The study consisted of eight interviews from K-8th grade principals of public schools in urbanized areas located in Louisiana. Purposeful sampling of three participants was initially executed. With permission of the Louisiana State University AgCenter Institutional Review Board, I contacted potential participants with prescreening questions. Upon confirming the participant met the study parameters, I then invited the participant to take part in a face-to-face interview. If participants agreed, I then scheduled an interview and an informed consent was emailed to them at that time. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed by an independent analyst and myself. From there, theoretical sampling was employed. Interviews

were conducted until saturation was reached. Throughout data collection, field notes were collected to describe my observations. In addition, I actively used memo writing to garner and guide my thought process. Media files of the interviews were sent to a hired transcription company. Once returned, I analyzed the data using handwritten, color coded methods such as highlighting transcriptions, using sticky notes, and using color coded grouping and printing. At first the data was analyzed using initial (open) coding methods. After the initial coding process, I then shifted to focused coding. Theoretical sampling and constant comparison were employed interchangeably throughout the data collection and data analysis phases of the study. In addition to coding, field notes and memo writing were extremely important components of data analysis process.

Philosophical Foundation

I have both professional and personal interests in this study. As a program development specialist for 4-H Youth Development, a non-formal education organization, there are significant aspects of my position that focus on character education programming in elementary and secondary schools. From a personal perspective, I realize that my views have been shaped by my parents, who were both educators. My father was a principal, and my mother was a teacher. My parents raised me in a very supportive, spiritual environment. It wasn't until my father passed away after 30 years of experience in education, 20 of those years as a high school principal, that I clearly realized how much influence a principal can really have on students. In the thirteen years since his death, people are still sharing their stories about how he changed their lives. They have also recounted how the school is a completely different place now. Some of my father's former students have expressed concerns about sending their children to their beloved

alma mater because of the changes they have observed. Thus, it is only fair to acknowledge that, in my eyes, the principal influences every facet of the school positively and/or negatively.

I believe that meaning is socially constructed, thus I acknowledge that I was an active participant in the interview process through my interaction with principals as I interviewed them. I have actively chosen a constructivist approach to grounded theory methodology because of the unavoidable relationship between the interviewee and myself as an interviewer. In more practical terms, I recognize that both my verbal and nonverbal actions may have affected the interviewee and his or her response to me. Likewise, principals' verbal and nonverbal actions will affect me. Collectively, our social construction of the meaning surrounding principals' beliefs and attitudes about SEL affected what I, as the researcher, can both know and explain (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). Charmaz (2014, p 13) states, "viewing the research as constructed rather than discovered fosters researchers' reflexivity about their actions and decisions." As a constructivist, I believe that every past experience I have had has shaped me and made me into the person I am today. My focus as a researcher is on understanding the principals' views of SEL and interpreting how they construct meaning about SEL within their school setting. I find the flexibility of the constructivist grounded theory method appealing because it adopts the approaches of comparison, emergence, open-endedness, and iterative logic (Charmaz, 2014).

Assumptions

I acknowledge that I believe that the school principal is the formal influencer when it comes to implementing and integrating new programs and concepts.

Definitions

Attitudes- "a latent disposition or tendency to respond with some degree of favorableness or
        unfavorableness to a psychological object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, p. 76).

Belief- "the subjective probability that an object has a certain attribute" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, p. 96)

Character- is operationally defined as an individual's approach to being a good person that entails being caring, helpful, respectful, dependable, and a person who honors their word.

Character education- intentional and focused effort to help students recognize, comprehend, care about and act upon core ethical values (Lickona, 1992).

PERMA Model- The PERMA Model was developed by psychologist, and author of the book *Flourish,* Martin Seligman (2012). PERMA stands for the five essential elements that should be in place for us to experience lasting well-being. They are: (P) Positive Emotion, (E) Engagement, (R) Positive Relationships, (M) Meaning, and (A) Accomplishments/ Achievements.

Social and emotional learning- the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2003, p. 1).

Social Influence- operationally, I am using the definition presented for subjective norms to represent what I mean by the pressure felt. Subjective norms can be defined as an individual's perceptions about those who are important and what their thoughts are regarding performing or not performing a particular behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emerging cultural trends or pop culture have changed the entire concept of childhood (Postman, 1994, 2005). Children today are being persuaded and forced into adult agendas, and in some cases acting as the responsible adult in the family. These cultural trends have somehow warped logic and are reaching youth in powerful numbers with messages that play down the value of hard work and glorify the message of expectation, entitlement, and immediate gratification (Elias, 2009). This egocentric world that has been created for our children is pervasive. It is a world youth are constantly exposed to as they leave home in the morning, as they fill the school halls, and as they return home (Elias, 2009). Some researchers have indicated there is a "value crisis" plaguing the youth of American (Kunjufu, 1993; Lickona, 1992). Those who proclaim that school should be strictly academic and that teaching character education and social skills should be left up to parents may be underestimating the extent to which youth are being sensitized to these negative influences in the media and everywhere they turn (Elias, 2009). It is becoming more evident that these ever-increasing social problems may be a result of the diminishing strength of the family, the school, community, and faith organizations. Somewhere along the way the moral development of our youth has fallen by the wayside resulting in them now being raised by a media-rich culture (Lickona, 1992).

The Greek meaning of character is "to mark" as in engraving. Youth are marked with character based on what they experience and are exposed to. Character is something that youth attain as they witness adults and others in their environment modeling it (Comer, 2003). Character is a learned behavior that youth should be learning it at home. If they are not, schools need to teach it in order to keep youth on track academically (Elias, 2009). For the most part,

character is framed as either good or bad, and as observable in one's behavior (Walberg & Wynne, 1989). It is the triggering of knowledge and values which comprises behavioral, affective and cognitive components (Huitt, 1996). Character can be and often times is defined in many different ways and used in many different contexts. For the purpose of this study, character is defined as an individual's approach to being a good person that entails being caring, helpful, respectful, dependable, and a person who honors their word.

Character Education

Schools today are being called on to expand and serve more diverse students with varied backgrounds, abilities and motivations for learning than ever before (Greenberg et al., 2003). The thought of character education in schools has been and will continue to be met with controversy and divisiveness (Kohn, 1997; Howard, Berkowitz, Schaeffer, 2004). Even with this controversy, many educators, politicians, parents and researchers can see the need for character education, given all the violence and tragedies, experienced in our schools. Much of this discord that comes with the term character education can be traced to the lack of a sound, operational definition of character to use as a basis for evaluation (Berkowitz, et al., 2012).

Lickona (1992) defines character education as the intentional and focused effort to help students understand, care about and act upon core ethical values. Character education involves building a network of positive pro-social relationships, but on a larger more broad scale it encompasses overall comprehensive school reform (Berkowitz et al., 2012). Tom Lickona and Matt Davidson (2005) describe the two sides of character education by identifying that there is moral character and performance character. Where would the world be if there were caring honest people who couldn't perform their professions/skills effectively? Should a kind, yet incompetent doctor be able to perform surgery? In contrast, what if there were only perfectly

skilled people, but the people do not have any social skills or a moral compass? Can a person be

trusted that is not considered ethical? This is where the importance and difference that Davidson

and Lickona described come into play. It's the idea that character is not just about doing the

right thing (i.e., moral character; Lickona & Davidson, 2005), it is also about doing our best

work (i.e., moral character; Lickona & Davidson, 2005). Character education refers to the

formal lessons, while stressing the development of students' moral character as a whole

(Berkowitz, Battistich & Bier, 2008). The emphasis of character education is on fostering

ethical, responsible and caring students through modeling (CASEL, 2003).   When approaching

character education as a holistic strategy, it teaches students to "know the good"- building an

awareness of being a responsible, caring human being, "love the good"- developing an inner

motivation to "do the good"- actually placing the values into action (Matula, 2004, p. 3).

As with most things, the positive effects of character education programs can be seen

when it 1) is well designed, 2) uses research-based principles, and 3) is implemented with the

intended fidelity (Berkowitz et al., 2012). Well-designed in its' strongest sense means there is a

solid theoretical framework around which the program is designed. The incorporation of

learning theories such as experiential learning, constructivism, and problem-based learning are

hallmarks of well-designed programs. In some cases, well-designed programs may simply have

a logical program theory where the planned activities lead to the anticipated outcomes (Durlak &

Dupre, 2008). Character education programs that have a strong focus on the overall climate of a

school and use a comprehensive approach help students learn how to treat others and make

difficult ethical choices and decisions (Berkowitz et al., 2012). Character education programs

should be implemented with the intended fidelity. Fidelity of implementation is the degree to

which a program is implemented as it was so prescribed (Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco &

Hansen, 2003).   When considering effectiveness, there are dimensions of fidelity to be

considered such as: adherence to program protocol, dosage of program delivery, quality of

program delivery, program component differentiation and participant responsiveness (Elliott &

Mihalic, 2004). When character education programs are successfully implemented many of the

following effects should be noticeably present: increased problem solving skills, increased

emotional competency, improved academic achievement, increased attachment to school,

reduced violence/aggression, drug use, alcohol use and sexual behaviors, and improved

relationships with teachers and peers (Benninga. Berkowitz, Kuehn & Smith, 2003).

There have been many programs identified as effective character education programs

which impact a wide range of outcomes (Berkowitz et al., 2012; Otten, 2000).

> Suitable methods identified for teaching adolescents about character are: 1) utilize
> experiential programs (after school youth development programs) which offer students
> the opportunity to apply knowledge in everyday situations; 2) recognize character
> education and academics as interdependent not a temporary fad where character
> education is an abstracted add-on to the curriculum; 3) introduce role models who can
> scaffold student moral development experiences; and 4) promote positive peer influence
> (Fox, Jones, Machtmes & Cater, 2012, p. 5).

Academic curriculum standards and assisting children develop the skills needed to display sound

character are complementary concepts that work together to foster lifelong success for youth to

grow into enhanced learners (Kress, Norris, Schoenholz, Elias, Seigle, 2004).

Character Education's Connection to Social and Emotional Learning

While focusing on common values is the staple of character education, many programs

often emphasize the importance of developing social and emotional learning (SEL) skills

(CASEL, 2003). Character education and SEL have considerable overlap. While the two use

different approaches, character education and SEL share the same fundamental basis.   They are

mutually grounded in the notion that in order to have safer schools, improve academic success,

12

and produce responsible and caring citizens, we must focus on the whole child (Elias, et al., 2003). Character education and SEL nurture increased awareness, positive connections and decent, caring behaviors (Matula, 2004). Character education focuses on values while social and emotional learning focuses on skills and attitudes (Elias, , Parker, Kash, Weissberg & O'Brien, 2008).

Character education and SEL both provide a deeper understanding of moral character as indicated when schools are caring communities of character with rich values, and assure children are provided the opportunities and competencies required to utilize and apply their moral character in their school communities (Elias, et al., 2008). A systematic approach to building social and emotional skills encourages character and increases the ability to engage in the charge of learning and academic instruction (Elias, 2009).

In an address at the Ministry of Education (MOE) Work Plan Seminar, Mr. Heng Swee Kiat, Education Minister of Singapore, (2011) stated:

> We need personal values to enable each of us to have the confidence and self-awareness, and the grit and determination to succeed. We need moral values, such as respect, responsibility, care and appreciation towards others to guide each of us to be a socially responsible person. In particular, for our multi-cultural society, a sense of shared values and respect allows us to appreciate and celebrate our diversity, so that we stay cohesive and harmonious. We need values of citizenship. As a young nation with a short history of independence, we must have informed, rugged and resilient citizens who can stay united to overcome crisis and adversities which we must expect to happen from time to time (p. 5).

Simplistically, character is about being a good person, while SEL is the idea of living a good life. Being a good person and living the best life possible is what all humans should be striving for in order to be productive, contributing citizens.

Social and Emotional Learning Defined

Social and emotional learning was first introduced as a conceptual framework to address the social, day to day, necessities of young people and the division of the response of schools to those needs (Elias et al., 1997). Social and emotional learning is used as an umbrella term for many kinds of programs, much like character education (Cohen, 2006; Hoffman, 2009; Otten, 2000). According to Zins & Elias (2006), SEL is "the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others, competencies that clearly are essential for all students."

> Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2013, p. 6).

No matter the source of the definition for SEL, the premise of the wide array of definitions is that SEL is a process by which individuals learn skills to form and maintain healthy relationships, recognize and manage emotions, and effectively solve problems and make decisions (CASEL, 2013). Most SEL programs are focused on general prevention and promotion are an emphasis of many SEL programs, and are intended to enhance the growth of all children (Zins & Elias, 2006). One distinguishing quality of SEL versus character education is that these skills can be practiced autonomously of ethical integrity or moral influence (Humphrey, 2013). SEL skills are not grounded in the idea of morality. These skills can be possessed whether being used in a good or bad way.

History of Social Emotional Learning

According to Zins, Elias, and Greenberg (2007), the term "social-emotional learning" was a result of a long journey involving multiple concepts, research and practices that included

important contributions from moral and character education. John Dewey's suggestion to the education environment that empathy and interpersonal management were needed skills led the discussion into the educational realm (Dewey, 1933). Elements of SEL as a means to improve and obstruct the educational and socialization processes are definitely not new, as they can be traced back many centuries (Dixon, 2012; Hoffman, 2009), beginning with philosophies from both Aristotle and Socrates (Goleman, 1995). Key thinkers in history have no doubt touted the importance of emotions related to human experiences and education. However, it was not in the educational spotlight spanning the 1940s-1970s. In the 1980's, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence proposed that intelligence could be thought of in seven ways: logical, spatial, linguistic, musical, kinesthetic, intrapersonal and interpersonal (Gardner, 1983). Social and emotional learning re-emerged around the early 1990's as an emphasis for education (Hoffman, 2009) and evolved from prevention and resiliency research (Zins & Elias, 2006). Goleman's (1995) *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* book brought attention about SEL to the general public. The book posits that all humans are social and emotional beings first, and educational and social systems that don't take this into consideration will be unsuccessful in developing well-rounded people (Goleman, 1995).

The actual development of the phrase social and emotional learning can be attributed to early meetings in 1993 of the initial group now known as the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, or CASEL (CASEL, 2003). The emphasis on SEL was solidified in 2001 when the National Conference of State Legislators deemed it necessary to pass a resolution backing the teaching of social and emotional skills in schools (Hoffman, 2009). In 2004, Illinois led the way and became the first and only state to develop explicit, free-standing SEL goals and benchmarks for K-12 students (Dusenbury, Zadrazil, Mart & Weissberg, 2011). As a result,

other states began considering the same route (Hoffman, 2009). Some other leading states in the effort to incorporate social and emotional competencies into their statewide curriculum standards were Iowa, South Carolina, Wisconsin, New York, and New Jersey (Kress et al., 2004). Currently, SEL is integrated to some extent into mandated K-12 learning standards in most states This is due largely in part to the No Child Left Behind Act which was updated in 2013 to embrace the development of social and emotional competencies as part of the Title IV-Successful, Safe and Healthy Students (Humphrey, 2013). No Child Left Behind was replaced by The Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015. This new law empowers States to create their own accountability which offers flexibility to find the best local solutions. It is unknown how that will affect the future and momentum of SEL.

Benefits of SEL

Research suggests that participants of SEL programming have greater school relatedness, better discipline, and enhanced educational outcomes (Denham & Brown, 2010; Zins et al., 2004). The benefits of SEL expand beyond the school. The notable benefits of SEL are academic achievement, improved behavior in school and improved behavior outside of school, (Matula, 2004). According to a meta-analysis study conducted by Payton, et al (2008), SEL programs "improved students' social-emotional skills, attitudes about self and others, connection to school, positive social behavior, and academic performance; they also reduced students' conduct problems and emotional distress" (p. 7). The combination of these benefits result in the increased overall well-being of youth. SEL can be seen as promoting educational achievement and well-being while reducing troubles like drug, tobacco, and alcohol abuse, violence, and agression (Elias, Gara, Schuyler, Branden-Muller & Sayette, 1991).

New evidence shows that as education is approached from a more holistic perspective, higher academic achievement is fostered (CASEL, 2003).   Academic success indicators include improved grades, improved standardized test scores, and higher academic motivation and educational aspirations (Zins and Elias, 2006).   Also noted, improved behavior in school indicators ranged from getting along better with others, to reduced referrals and fewer absences and suspensions (Greenberg et al., 2003).   In addition to, and as a result of, in school improved behaviors, some beneficial out-of-school behaviors have surfaced, such as employers being more attentive to the social skills and the character of individuals than to their technical skills (Wagner, 2003). More attention is given to responsible decision-making and to relationship management by employers (Matula, 2004).

SEL Skills Needed

Children and youth are constantly faced with situations which bring them to personal and interpersonal crossroads (Elias, et. al, 1997). Their abilities and competencies to effectively react to such crossroads are at the heart of SEL. These skills are developmental and should be aligned and sequenced based on age appropriateness (Humphrey, 2013).   Youth need skills for interacting with others, self-awareness of feelings and responses to situations, sound decision-making skills that take into account all information, the ability to manage temper or emotions, and tolerance of the others' differences. Underperformance in education, particularly selective underperformance of minority students and at-risk learners, can be identified in the failure to address social and emotional learning and character education in schools (Elias, 2009). Youth may come to schools at a variety of levels related to academics and social and emotional skills, and teachers and schools should be prepared to support youth at varying levels. This means there should be a focus on meeting all youth where they are and equipping them with the skills

17

they need. These skills must be imparted in partnership with the schools, parents and surrounding communities (Elias, et.al, 1997).

The four main domains in work is required to construct and support SEL skills are 1) life skills and social competencies, 2) health-promotion and problem-prevention skills, 3) coping skills and social support for transitions and crises, and 4) positive, contributory service (Elias, et. al, 1997, p. 1017). These domains involve the coordination of skills in emotion, cognition and behavior which are all necessary in classrooms, schools and beyond. The skills most often reported as being critical for today's youth to progress into adulthood are those linked to SEL (Day & Koorland, 1997). Some examples of life skill and social competencies include self-control, problem solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, goal- setting, and a wide array of communication skills such as relationship building. These skills are needed in every environment that humans experience, and are critical to success.   Health-promotion and problem-prevention skills include strategies to reduce the instances drug and alcohol abuse, violence, suicide attempts and other risky behaviors. These skills are specific to particular problems or risks. Coping skills and social support are related directly to stressful situations, and children's ability to deal with those in healthy ways. This domain is highly important and is critical for SEL programs to incorporate opportunities for teachers to delve into deeper discussions and practices of self-awareness and self-management. The last of the four domains is the positive contributory service domain. The positive contributory service domain is directly related to the desire to belong, to serve others, and to see oneself as an active member of the community (Elias, et. al, 1997).

Key Competencies of Effective SEL

The CASEL group worked tirelessly to develop and define the key skills and attitudes comprising the construct of SEL. According to CASEL (2003, 2015), "there are five key competencies that are taught, practiced, and reinforced through effective SEL programming. These key competencies are self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, self-management, and relationship skills (CASEL, 2003, 2013). According to CASEL (2003) *Self-awareness* involves the identification and acknowledgement of one's own emotions, strengths in self and others, sense of self-efficacy, and self-confidence. *Social awareness* involves having empathy, respect for others, and perspective taking. *Responsible decision making* involves evaluation and reflection, and personal and ethical responsibility. *Self-management* involves impulse control, stress management, persistence, goal setting, and motivation. *Relationship skills* involve cooperation, help seeking and providing, and communication.

Just as students can learn academic skills, they can also learn SEL skills to be applied both inside and outside of the classroom (Zins & Elias, 2006). When focusing on emotional skills, it becomes clear that it is more about the reasoning and the behaviors related to that reasoning as opposed to the actual emotion (Hoffman, 2009). If youth can be taught such skills early on it allows them to discover more about themselves, and in turn strike the proper balance.

Detractors of SEL

There are continuous debates whether SEL programs have thorough proof of programs that yield positive results (Hoffman, 2009). In the world of SEL advocates, it is evident that concentrating on social and emotional competencies benefits students and the overall school. Humphrey (2013) criticizes SEL supporters indicating they seem to exude an attitude that there is no need to collect evidence because they 'know' that SEL works. In contrast, some

researchers are not as convinced about the benefits of SEL, and believe the research lacks empirical and evaluative rigor (Hoffman, 2009). These opposed researchers are calling for more work and effort to link the practices and ideals of SEL (Hoffman, 2009).

Because SEL is seen as an umbrella term covering a smorgasbord of concepts, it diminishes the quality of impacts in research (Zeidner, Roberts & Matthews, 2002; Hoffman, 2009). The lack of framing or wobbly framing of SEL affects conceptual rigor (Humphrey, 2013). The wide array of definitions and broad focus areas create serious concerns regarding validity (Merrell & Gueldner, 2012). Some school-based intervention programs which proclaim best practices in the name of SEL actually have very little relevance to the concept of social and/or emotional content (Zeidner et al, 2002; Humphrey, 2013). This lack of clarity makes it almost impossible to build consensus on a common understanding of SEL (Humphrey, 2013). Problematic assumptions regarding SEL have plagued the progression of SEL programming. The subsequent paragraphs identify and discuss some of these key assumptions.

One problem is the assumption that SEL produces conformity (Craig, 2007; Watson, Emery & Bayliss, 2012) by minimizing or streamlining the development of social and emotional competence of youth. This minimization previously mentioned could create stringent checklists which can be detrimental to the development of youth (Watson et al, 2012). These concerns suggest that such checklists create an environment and system of conformity telling youth how to think, feel and behave (Craig, 2007).

In some approaches to SEL there is an assumption that everyone has to be taught about their emotions, feelings and relationships (Eccelstone, 2007; Craig, 2007). This assumption gives the idea that no one can naturally control and manage their emotions and feelings and maintain healthy relationships. This thought is negated by looking at so many people who have

managed to turn their negative situation into a positive one despite their environmental circumstances. While teaching the skills may provide optimal chances, assuming that all have to be taught and do not possess these skills naturally is a stretch.

Another problem is the perception that SEL undermines the cognitive and academic functions of education instead of supporting it (Diamond, 2010; Furedi, 2009). Undermining is meant in the sense that teaching and encouraging the development of SEL skills takes away from academic performance. Since these SEL programs are often conducted in innovative, fun ways, some contend they lack the rigor of traditional academic approaches.

A problematic issue for researchers is that assessment seems to be seen as an afterthought (Merrell & Gueldner, 2012). There is a lack of creditable assessment instruments designed with SEL competencies specifically in mind (Merrell & Gueldner, 2012). Of over 200 identified measures of social and emotional skills, only 12 had any kind of reasonable 'shelf life' (Humphrey, Lalambouka, Wigelsworth, Lendrum, Deighto & Wolpert, 2011). Shelf-life refers to the degree to which programs are implemented with commitment and that have some indicators of making a difference. Few if any, well-validated measures exist that can encompass the various domains of social and emotional competence (Wigelsworth, Humphrey, Kalambouka & Lendrum, 2010; Merrell & Gueldner, 2012).

In addition to few existing assessment instruments, there are methodological limitations pertaining to outcomes (Humphrey, 2013). According to Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger's (2011) school-based meta-analysis, the following results lead to some concerns regarding outcomes: 53 percent of studies were solely self-reported; 42 percent of the programs did not monitor implementation at all, 19 percent were unpublished reports, 24 percent used

measures with poor or no reported reliability, and 49 percent used measures with poor or no reported validity (Humphrey, 2013).

There are still many unknowns and questions to be answered. Humphrey (2013) contends there is still very little known about how different program components interact with one another producing effective outcomes and SEL interventions for those in secondary/high school, which makes up only 13 percent of the evidence base (Durlak et al, 2011). The depth of research and evidence in SEL is a concern. Most SEL evidence-base abides in the realm of efficacy versus effectiveness (Humphrey, 2013). This can be seen as schools fail to replicate reported intervention effects (Greenberg et al., 2005). As such, this evidence-base lacks external validity (Humphrey, 2013).

Schools as a Context

Schools play an important role in encouraging youth to succeed at cognitive development and social and emotional development (Durlak, et al., 2011). Schools are the primary place where children learn how to exist in social environments, and where children begin to negotiate their position in such environments (Aviles, et al., 2006). Schools are important because of their place in the community structure and the amount of time that youth spend there (Baker et. al, 2003; Aviles, et al., 2006). Additionally, schools expose youth to large, diverse populations (as compared to home or extended family) in a safe place where caring and trusting relationships develop with adults beyond family. Schools have an important influence on youth becoming responsible, caring, knowledgeable citizens. In the words of Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg (2007), "Schools are social places, and learning is a social process" (p. 191). Learning, particularly in school, leverages social bonds which makes social and emotional character development necessary for academic success (Elias, 2009). The school setting is ideal for

providing services to children that can have a positive impact on educational outcomes and emotional development (Aviles, et al., 2006).

School provides a space for children to explore behaviors, beliefs and values (Farmer, E. & Farmer, T., 1999). As youth interact at schools, they learn more about themselves and others. Schools influence children's experiences and self-perceptions (Baker et al., 2003). This influence allows children to form their beliefs about the purpose and goals of education (Baker et al., 2003). Baker et al. (2003) suggests that schools will likely have a positive influence when the school has a good balance between developmental needs and a safe school environment. Positive relationships serve as protective factors for children and can offset abuse, neglect or violence (Aviles, et al., 2006; Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence, 1994; Morrison, Furlong, & Morrison, 1994). However, high risk factors related to the climate of a school can also increase the likelihood of violence problems among children (Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence, 1994; Morrison, Furlong, & Morrison, 1994). When schools are unable to provide adequate support and structured activities for positive peer relations, they may contribute to school violence (Baker, 1998).

SEL Leadership

Programs often become more of a nuisance when there is a lack of strong leadership and a well-organized and purposed implementation (Greenberg et al., 2003). It is suggested that SEL be a collaborative effort on the part of all (families, schools and communities) in order to enhance the children's success, academically, socially and emotionally (Gordan, Ji, Mulhall, Shaw & Weissberg, 2011). This idea of a collaborative effort aligns with Brofenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). Support of administration is the key in adopting and implementing an effective, sustaining SEL climate. School leadership such as principals and

program coordinators can influence SEL implementation significantly by establishing school priorities, establishing a defined vision, obtaining adequate funding and resources, allotting time for training, and much more (Durlak & Dupre, 2008). It is important to have key champions of the program, but the principal should be the ultimate leader in this effort (Zins & Elias, 2006). The principal is needed to support and encourage diverse roles, continuing professional development and coaching, planning, program observation and assessment, and resource distribution (Zins & Elias, 2006). The principal must encourage others that their efforts can make a difference, and that it is possible to have successful implementation (Pasi, 1997). The principal must provide consistent feedback and follow up (Pasi, 1997). Experienced teachers are capable of creating and designing practical applications and are able to mentor less experienced teachers (Pasi, 1997). While experienced teachers serve as another important leader in implementation, it is the principal's job to identify the right person to champion the movement.

Program Implementation

In order to address the growing troubles and issues our youth are faced with, legislators and administrators are introducing well-intentioned prevention and promotion programs, but these programs often have an inverse affect if not approached properly.   When establishing a prevention program, there should be a strong planning and logic model approach that specifies the exact goals of the program, and the steps that need to be taken in order to accomplish said goals (Linney & Wandersman, 1996). On a wide scale, there are very few replicated prevention programs due to the lack of successful implementation (Elliott & Mihalic, 2004; Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence (CSAP), 2001; Greenberg et al., 2003; Mihalic & Irwin, 2003).

Planning, leadership, school-wide/district-wide implementation, staff development, faculty communication and a long-term time frame are essential and must be present in effective program implementation (CASEL, 2003). The principal or coordinating administrator should take the lead and implement small group faculty meetings (Pasi, 1997).   The rich discussions that can take place at these meetings prove to be invaluable.   The meetings allow the principal to model and express support and rally the team to commit to the initiative. It's also a time for faculty to openly express concerns and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program (Pasi, 1997). More importantly than all, the discussions create awareness about the specific issues related to the students' social and emotional well-being in turn allow for consensus building about what action is needed (Pasi, 1997).   Faculty must feel confident that they can incorporate social and emotional components in their lessons (Pasi, 1997).   It is important to incorporate practical workshops and interdepartmental meetings.

Approaches that involve everyone, students, parents, educators and community members as partners tend to be the most effective and are sustained over time (Zins & Elias, 2006). This involvement shouldn't just be a surface involvement. Instead, it must be present throughout the planning, implementing, and evaluating of the SEL programs (Zins & Elias, 2006).

Integrated Curriculum

A developmentally appropriate, intentional program that can be implemented and used over time is ideal in an effective SEL program (Elias et al. 1997). Some educators may see SEL as an added responsibility, but effective schools are beginning to figure out that not only are social and emotional competence and academic achievement connected, they are inextricably linked (Zins, & Elias, 2006).   It is important to remember that learning is not purely cognitive (Brandt, 2003). Emotions tend to drive attention, learning and memory (LeDoux, 2000). "The

degree to which SEL or similar programs are integrated into comprehensive school programs is a key issue" (McCombs, 2004, p. 23). The integration of SEL in curricula may be inadvertent, but none the less, has proven to be important to success (Fredericks, 2003). Integration is the process of fitting into a community, system or environment.

It is difficult to separate SEL influence versus explicit academic instruction that's embedded in some programs (Humphrey, 2013). Often upon closer review of curriculum standards and policy, SEL skills can be found embedded (Kress, et al., 2004) which is the case with The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The essence and intent of the NCLB Act was about accountability, choice and flexibility, focusing on literacy, character education and school safety (Kress et al., 2004). Yet, educators and administrators seem to focus on the accountability with curriculum standards and assessments (Kress et al., 2004). State curriculum standards should not hinder the development of other necessary, life-long skills youth need. Often times if state standards are carefully examined, there are social and emotional skills entrenched within the academic standards (Kress et. al, 2004). Kress and researchers (2004) contend that these content standards and SEL skills should be seen as essential instead of either-or aspects of education.

In addition, it stands to reason that clear integrated, coordinated instruction in both social and emotional competence and academic achievement areas improves children's ability to achieve success both proximally and distally (Zins, & Elias, 2006). The overall message and goal is that by using the SEL guidelines and infusing them into ongoing, daily activities and program delivery systems are less disruptive of organizational routines and resources, and will result in sustainability (Zins, & Elias, 2006).

Problem solving and decision-making are complex thinking processes enhanced by the increase in the competence of SEL skills and are frequently at the forefront of the curriculum integration discussion (Arredondo & Rucinski, 1998). Time is a significant problem in implementing integrated curriculum (Arredondo & Rucinski, 1998). Higher levels of integrated curricula often result in schools where principal's had more flexible beliefs knowledge structure and were more accepting (Arredondo & Rucinski, 1998). The need to identify variables which affect principals' support of cohesive curriculum has long been a need. Knowing these influential factors may help predict implementation strategies and inform how implementation efforts may play out.

Social Influence

Brofenbrenner's ecological system theory (1989) identifies different levels of factors influencing the commitment of administrators to integrate SEL. According to Brofenbrenner (1989), school context is seen as a set of embedded structures. The ecological systems theoretical framework allows investigation into the effects of individual traits and interpersonal and contextual factors that affect decision-making on the administrative level. Saab (2009) broke down the layers presented by Brofenbrenner as it applies to schools: microsystem (informal social networks, friends, teachers, and peers), mesosystem (school resources, school management, teaching practices reflecting school culture), exosystem (broader community, other schools, parents, external organizations), and the macrosystem (policies, procedures and rules).

Social Cognitive Theory explains how people acquire and maintain behaviors. Individuals learn from their own experiences as well as observing the people surrounding them (Bandura, 1986). There is a three-way relationship between environmental, personal, and behavior factors. "Human development from the perspective of social cognitive theory

27

encompasses many different types and patterns of changes. What people think, believe, and feel, affects how they behave" (Bandura, 1986, p. 2). "Human expectations, beliefs, emotional bents and cognitive competencies are developed and modified by social influences that convey information and activate emotional reactions through modeling, instruction and social persuasion" (Bandura, 1989, p. 3). Leadership is a multifaceted duty composed of thought and behavior that happens in a social environment (McCormick, 2001). Applying social cognitive theory to leadership includes considering social pressure to affect the actions of others.

The theory of planned behavior posits that behavioral, normative, and control beliefs affect behavior. Behavioral beliefs produces a positive or negative attitude toward the behavior, normative beliefs focuses on subjective norms, and control beliefs focus on how easy or hard it is to perform the behavior. These three things lead to the formation of behavioral intention (Ajzen, 2002). The social environment can influence people's intentions and actions. Subjective norms is a main focus when considering influencing whether an individual has intentions of completing a behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Norms in general are viewed as perceived social pressure to complete a particular behavior. Subjective norms can be defined as an individual's perceptions about those who are important and what their thoughts are regarding performing or not performing a particular behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The term subjective is used because this perception may or may not impact what important people actually think about performing the behavior. French & Rave (1959) suggested five types of power that may allow others to exert influence on one's behavior. Reward power concerns those thought to have the power to reward the desired behavior. Coercive power concerns those thought to hand out punishment for non- compliance. Legitimate power concerns those that have the right to prescribe the behavior due to their role. Expert power concerns those who have perceived

expertise. Referent power concerns those who may identify with others, and aspire to be more like them (French & Rave, 1959).   Therefore, perceived social pressure can influence behavior whether or not there are anticipated rewards or punishments.

Role of the Principal in Schools

"Successful leadership is critical to school reform" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 27). Principals have a significant indirect impact on student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Cotton, 2003). The authority of principals has long been up for debate. Among the wealth of principal leadership studies regarding authority, most lean towards the effectiveness of principals in the part of facilitator over authoritarian (Bryk et al., 2010; Louis et al., 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). As a facilitator, there are more solid effects on the school climate opposed to instruction (Louis et al., 2010; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). This is echoed in a study conducted by Bouchamma, Basque and Marcotte (2014) which surveyed forty-nine school principals and vice principals.

According to Bouchamma, Basque and Marcotte (2014) results indicated that principals assigned importance to components of their profession based on perceptions of their self-efficacy as follows:

- Management of education services- 1) organize the school to focus on the students' academic need and 2) support the development of instructional practices adapted to the students' needs.
- Human resources- 1) ensure effective action in my practice and in that of my staff, 2) ensure effective action by each work group, and 3) continue to develop my skills and those of my staff member.
- Educational environment- 1) assist the school council as mandated by law, 2) head the development of a school initiative and the implementation of a results-oriented academic achievement plan, and 3) foster the development of collaborations and partnerships centered on student achievement.
- Administration- 1) effectively and efficiently manage the school's financial resources and b) effectively and efficiently manage the school's material resources (para. 5).

Transformational leadership aims to create organizational innovation, and empower and support teachers in shared decision-making (Marks & Printy, 2003). While there are several transformational actions, Elias, Obrien and Weissberg (2006) recommend the following transformation actions are non-negotiable; "leading with vision and courage, beginning and integrating efforts schoolwide, and implementing with integrity" (p. 11). While transformational leadership does lack an explicit focus on curriculum and instruction which is considered equally as important (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998), an integrated form of leadership happens when transformational principal leaders can also accept their collaborative instructional role with teachers (Marks, & Printy, 2003).

Motivation

Principals have preferences, interests, and aspirations. These are the things that motivate individuals intrinsically. The self-determination theory (SDT) brings to question a differentiated approach to motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A sub-theory of the SDT is the cognitive evaluation theory (CET) which posits that social environments encourage the development of intrinsic motivation by supporting it. It focuses on the need for competence and autonomy as fundamental in motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).   This discussion is important when you consider the idea that expected tangible rewards that are based on task performance reliably undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). In addition to tangible rewards, threats, deadlines, imposed goals just to name a few also undermine intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Even though it is known that people will only be intrinsically motivated for those things that are of interest to them, a need still exists to be able to effectively complete other tasks that are not of significant interest (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Research suggests that those in management and leadership must also pay attention and draw motivation and preference towards

things that may or may not be in their innate nature. In their quest to inspire, principals may need to motivate employees and cohorts even when they are not fully committed or motivated themselves.

Extrinsic motivation refers to performing for the purpose of some underlying outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Another sub-theory of SDT, organismic integration theory (OST) explains the different forms of extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Extrinsically motivated behaviors cover a range from amotivation to intrinsic motivation. On this continuum, integrated regulation is very closely related to intrinsic motivation except these are tasks conducted to achieve an independent outcome, and not conducted just for fun (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Often times the decisions for leaders to get on board with a new concept or new program is being prompted or modeled by others they want to relate to or emanate. Therefore, the desire to belong can drive extrinsic motivation in addition to autonomy and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Through internalization and integration, individuals can be committed and authentic although the source is of an extrinsic origination (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Commitment and authenticity in both intrinsic motivation and integrated extrinsic motivation are most evident when the support for competence, autonomy and relatedness can be felt (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

General Definition of Beliefs and Attitudes

Fishbein & Ajzen (2010) define belief as "the subjective probability that an object has a certain attribute. The terms object and attribute are used in the generic sense, and they refer to any discriminable aspect of an individual's world" (p. 96-97). In a practical sense, this definition suggests that principals hold basic beliefs about SEL. Fishbein & Ajzen (2010) also define attitude as "a latent disposition or tendency to respond with some degree of favorableness or unfavorableness to a psychological object. The attitude object can be any discriminable aspect

31

of an individual's world, including a behavior" (p. 76). In all instances, an attitude involves

liking or disliking, favoring or disfavoring. It requires making a decision and implies that

principals make positive and negative judgments about SEL. This decision is based on

cognitive, affective and behavioral information (Maio & Haddock, 2010). The three

components of attitude are cognitive, affective and behavioral, and can be seen as people

organizing their thoughts, feelings and past experiences (Maio & Haddock, 2010). According to

Maio & Haddock (2010), the cognitive component refers to beliefs, thoughts and attributes, but

can be mainly based on the positive and negative attributes people associate with an object.

They refer to the affective component as feelings or emotions connected to an object, specifically

those feelings that arouse a response directly related to an object. The behavioral component

refers to past behaviors specifically related to an attitude object (Maio & Haddock, 2010).

Affective influences are post-cognitive. Before one can like something, they must first have

some knowledge about it and have identified some of its discriminant features (Zajonc, 1980).

Social interactions are dominated by the affective component. Feelings accompany all

cognitions early in the process. Although sometimes the feelings are weak and vague (Zajonc,

1980). The development of attitudes, in general, may also be understood within the specific

domain of principal leadership and how principals develop awareness and increase knowledge

about an object. In one study of the development of principal beliefs, less rigid beliefs regarding

the assembly of knowledge and more tolerance of ambiguity tended to warrant higher levels of

use of a multidisciplinary curriculum (Arredondo & Rucinski, 1998). A recommendation of this

study was that "more rigorous tests of relationships among principals' epistemological beliefs

and their support of innovations or other supervisory practices would be a fruitful area for future

research" (Arredondo & Rucinski, 1998, p. 294).

Framing principal epistemological beliefs within the realm of attitude formation leads to more concrete examples of how the components of attitudes have been explored. Peter Youngs (2007) looked at how principals' beliefs and actions influenced the experiences of new teachers. His study explored the cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes of principals. Principals' past experiences as teachers, as well as informal and formal professional development opportunities, greatly influenced how they viewed their present role as an administrator in the school. These experiences collectively form behavioral attitudes toward their role as an administrator. Cognitive attitudes describe a person's positive or negative beliefs about an object, while affective attitudes describe the emotions of a response about the particular object (Maio & Haddock, 2010). Principals who viewed themselves positively as leaders in the area of instruction were more focused on mentoring and honing instructional skills of novice teachers and found satisfaction in this approach. Principals who held positive cognitive attitudes toward their role as a disciplinarian were more focused on student behavior and were likely to feel less satisfied when addressing instructional issues directly (Carver, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, Carver, Schwille, & Yusko, 1999).

While this is only one example of how principals' attitudes influence their actions, there are countless other examples of how a person's attitudes affect their behavior. For example, if a person has a bad attitude regarding a particular subject, person, and/or thing, they will be more apt to be aloof in regards to that subject, person and/or thing. However, the research into principals' attitudes toward SEL is sparse and represents a needed area of research.

Principal Autonomy

Principal autonomy is key and has been reported to be associated with an increase in student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006). An indication of a successful superintendent is

one that allows the administrator the freedom to create and follow their own initiatives, while trusting they will complement the aims of the district (Sullivan & Shulman, 2005). All stakeholders must be on the same page and have aligned goals to achieve desired academic results (Sigerson et al., 2011). When thinking of principal autonomy, one important factor to consider is public school principals versus public charter school principals. One distinctive feature of charter schools in comparison to traditional public schools is the level of autonomy granted to principals (Gawlik, 2007).

Self-determination theory posits that an individual's controlled or autonomous perception of self is influenced by the environment (Black & Deci, 2000). Self-efficacy may also play a role. Lyons and Murphy (1994) found that principals that lacked being efficacious tend to use external power sources to force others into desired actions. In contrast, efficacious principals utilized intrinsic influence set the tone for others. A principal's belief in their level of ability can determine how they perceive and respond to environmental opportunities and impediment (Bandura, 1997; Federici, 2013). "Principals with high mastery expectations may focus more on challenges and possibilities, while principals with lower mastery expectations may focus more on impediments and obstacles" (Federici, 2013 p. 83). "The balance between accountability and autonomy is an important one, and principals who have little say over the terms, processes and outcomes of their work may undercut their sense of efficacy" (Gawlik, 2007, p. 18). Both holding principals accountable for student achievement, but not allowing autonomy and granting autonomy but not having any accountability are a bit insane.

Principals must build effective, trusting, affective relationship with their staff which is accomplished by having enough agency over their schools (Price, 2012). When principals are given the control of deciding how the vision and goals of their school will be determined, it

creates an atmosphere for the school to be effective (Goldring & Pasternack, 1994). The level of

autonomy that principals experience can affect their satisfaction and commitment level,

strengthen staff relations, and improve the culture of the school (Price, 2012). Traditionally,

urban principals are met with heightened pressures from outside entities that may constrain their

autonomy (Hannaway & Talbert, 1993).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This grounded theory study focused on principals' perceptions of their beliefs and attitudes about social and emotional learning. Grounded theory methodology allows the theory to emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2006).

Rationale for grounded theory methodology

Grounded theory can be positioned from the participants' point of view with a focus on social processes. It is established to investigate a broad range of open ended questions related to the social structures, situations and relationships which all impact patterns of behavior, interactions and explanations (Tweed & Charmaz, 2012). Grounded theory is appropriate when theories or areas of research are under-defined (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003). Hence, grounded theory was the best choice for this study because no clearly articulated theory exists explaining principals' attitudes toward and beliefs about SEL.

Grounded theory as Epistemology

There are two main underpinnings of grounded theory that are widely debated, the positivist paradigm and the interpretive paradigm. Both positivists and interpretivists agree when it comes to simultaneous collection and analysis of the data, and suggest a constant comparison of the data. The differences begin when identifying the overall goal of the grounded theory study, and establishing the purpose for conducting a constant comparison (O,Conner, Netting & Thomas, 2008). For purposes of this study, interpretivism and constructivism are considered synonymous (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

The initial purpose of grounded theory from a positivist viewpoint is to "create relevant theoretical abstractions describing or explaining the topic being studied, based on the assumption

that the concept itself would not change but the facts at a given point in time may" (O,Conner, et al., 2008, p. 30; Suddaby, 2006; Bryant, 2002). This means that while it is acknowledged that experiences happen within a context, the positivist reaction is not affected by what's happening around them. On the other hand, the purpose from an interpretive viewpoint focuses on "the creation of contextualized emergent understanding" (O,Conner, et al., 2008, p. 30; Scott, 2004). For the interpretevist, contextual factors may play a key role in the response of participants. In addition, the researcher becomes a participant, and the interactions of the researcher and participant intertwine. This aligns with Patton's (2015) statement of aligning with inductive strategies of theory development as opposed to logical deduction from *a priori* assumptions as seen in a positivist paradigm. The goal is knowledge based on the lived experiences of the participants. The belief is there is no real reality which means life is perception. Each individual has a different perception of what reality is. Realities include descriptions and interpretations unique to individuals (O,Conner, et al., 2008). The term "grounding" in positivistic research is "tied to whatever is true for the purpose of moving toward more generalized ways of knowing" (O,Conner, et al., 2008, p. 39).   Positivists seek a common, collective way of knowing. It is their stance that all should be in agreement with this reality. The word "grounding" from an interpretive perspective "contextualizes the information to the particulars of the participant(s) and the time and place of inquiry (O,Conner, et al., 2008, p. 39). Interpretivists acknowledge that the reality of individuals may vary depending on the situation, time and place. Multiple interpretivists will witness an event, and each may have very different beliefs about what transpired.   The interpretivist/constructivist approach was used for this study.

Advantages of using grounded theory

There are many strengths evident when using grounded theory as a methodology. Identified below are some of the key strengths that played a part in selecting grounded theory as the methodology for this study. Most importantly, grounded theory provides an opportunity for the theory to emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2006). This process of emergence occurs through initial and focused coding of the interviews. Through the process of constant comparison, theoretical categories are continually refined (Lingard, Albert & Levinson, 2008; Charmaz, 2008). While grounded theory has the potential to yield a lot of data, this is a strength when this abundance is characterized by relevance to and depth of the study (Hussein, Hirst, Salyers, & Osuji, 2014). When employing the grounded theory methodology, the data comes from the perspective of the participants (Charmaz, 2006). This direct line of communication lessens the opportunity of misrepresentation. Grounded theory's iterative process is appealing because of its flexibility. Data are simultaneously collected and analyzed with the resulting knowledge that is generated used to inform the next cycle of data collection (Lingard, et al., 2008). Finally, while guidance is provided in developing and connecting the emerging theoretical categories, there is the flexibility of having no preconceived destination in mind (Mills, et al., 2006).

Disadvantages of using grounded theory

Just as there are strengths to any methodology, there are weaknesses. Grounded theory can be an exhaustive process. There are huge volumes of data, time constraints, and money constraints just to name a few. It can become a daunting task for novice researchers, and they may lose sight of the ultimate task of allowing the themes to emerge (Hussein et al., 2014). Due to the timeline of being a graduate student, there tends to be an inclination to rush the process. Time is a limiting factor in developing the scope of a theory. Additionally, there are multiple

and misunderstood approaches to grounded theory. For decades Glaser, Strauss (1967), Charmaz (2006) and others have debated about grounded theory. For this reason, it is important to find a place in the literature of grounded theory and clearly align with an approach. There is potential for methodological errors (Hussein, et al., 2014). Errors for novice researchers are not uncommon. Some may tend to blur the lines of sampling by selecting purposeful sampling alone instead of imploring theoretical sampling. Other methodological errors may include mingling and muddling qualitative methods, premature closure, and methodological transgressions (Hussein, et al., 2014). Also, there is an idea that only lower-level theories are produced (Hussein, et al., 2014; Gasson, 2004). Lower-level categories tend to surface quickly, and it is up to the researcher to stay engaged with the data to reach higher-level categories with the integration of concepts (Gasson, 2004).

Participants

The unit of analysis is "the level of abstraction at which you look for variability" (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013, p. 26). In grounded theory, specifying the unit of analysis is another way of naming the study participants and is necessary in order to understand definitively the main focus of the study. The unit of analysis may also include episodes, individuals, places and other as defined by the researcher.

Distinctive elements of units with similar characteristics are compared, acknowledging their potential effect on outcomes. For this study, one way I defined the unit of analysis is by position or rank, specifically school principals. The participants for this study were K-8th grade principals of public schools in urban areas located in Louisiana. While other units of analysis (e.g., assistant principals, teachers, superintendents, counselors) may have been plausible, this study is bound by the single unit of school principals.

Another distinctive element used in this study was place, particularly as it relates to urban versus rural settings. For this study, urbanized areas were selected. Urban, suburban, and rural school settings typically have substantial differences in educational context and policy (Hannaway & Talbet, 1993). Urban schools are plagued with the exacerbating negative influence of antisocial behavior as children are exposed to significant risk factors both at home and in the community (McCurdy, Mannella, & Eldridge, 2003). The prevalence of exposure to violence and other undesired circumstances can make the job of those serving the urban areas more difficult. Educational opportunities are often more varied in urban settings where local tax resources are greater.

The principals' years of experience served as another distinctive element. For this study it was preferred that participants have a minimum of five years of experience as principal at their current school. This level of experience was selected with the idea that by that time, the principal should be able to formulate and articulate their beliefs. Additionally, research suggests that schools perform better when they are led by experienced (more than three years) principals (Clark, Martorell, & Rockoff, 2009).

Finally, the principals' willingness to adopt new innovations served as another distinctive element. I targeted those principals whose SEL integration most aligned with the late majority adopter ideal type (Rogers, 2003). In *Diffusion of Innovations*, Rogers (2003) states that late majority adopters are the skeptics. They are those who may be reluctant, and their decision to adopt new programs may be based on economic necessity and/or peer pressures. These late majority adopters must first see favorable results (Rogers, 2003). The decision about the unit of analysis is critical to the scope of any study because the larger the scope the more time and resources it will take to conduct the study (Guest, et al., 2013).

Sampling & Data Collection

Purposeful Sampling

Initially I used purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is defined as strategically selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) with specific purposes associated with answering the research study's questions (Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Patton, 2015). I selected K-8th grade school principals from urbanized areas with five or more years of experience. For the purpose of this study, urbanized areas was defined as having a population of 50,000 or greater (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The urbanized area cities in Louisiana are New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Kenner, and Bossier City. I then generated a list of principals using the Louisiana Department of Education's website as the initial searching tool. Next, I reduced the school list using the identified urbanized areas as a filter. Then I visited the individual school websites to seek contact information for principals. Using the generated list, I selected a principal from one of the schools meeting the K-8th grade criteria. The following pre-screening questions were used to determine if the principal met the study criteria: 1) How many years have you been principal at this school? 2) Have you implemented any new programs in the past 3 years? 3) Which of the following statements best describes you? a) I am always the first to introduce new curriculum/programs; b) I tend to wait before introducing new curriculum/programs until my colleagues have tried it; c) I prefer to wait until all the kinks have been worked out before I introduce new curriculum/programs. Principals who selected options b or c were invited to participate in the study. The principals were then asked for permission to conduct an in-depth, face-to-face interview.

Theoretical Sampling

After the analysis of the initial three interviews I established preliminary categories in which theoretical sampling was employed (Charmaz, 2011). As the data was collected and themes emerged, new or amended interview questions were added to the protocol to allow for closer examination of topics that emerge from the respondents (See appendices B, C, D, E). In addition, the criteria for participant sampling was affected as data emerged. There arose a need to interview principals that fell in the early adopter category.

I initially conducted three interviews within two days. Therefore, there was no opportunity to transcribe and review each interview before conducting the next interview. Transcripts for interviews one through three were received at the same time. Once the transcripts were received, I took each individual transcript and read the complete document without making any notes. It was my goal to have an overall conceptualization prior to beginning the open coding. I then went back to the first transcript and began the open coding process by writing notes in the margins, as well as underlining comments and phrases that stood out to me. I then left the document for a day or two and returned to the document to re-read and see if anything new emerged. I moved on to transcript two completing the same process of open coding by writing in the margins, underlining comments and phrases that stood out to me, removing myself from the document for a few days and returning to see if anything new emerged. At this point, I compared the initial codes of the first two interviews. I identified several related codes, and then began writing a few memos, pondering questions such as: How are these codes related? Is there another word to describe this group of words? I moved on to the third transcription, repeating the same process of open coding by writing in the margins, underlining comments and phrases that stood out to me, removing myself from the document for a few days and returning to

see if anything new emerged. I compared the initial codes of interview three to those of interview one and two. I identified the related codes and pondered the thought if or how do any of these codes interact with the prior two. At this point, I began to make decisions about which initial open codes were most significant, moving more into the focused coding realm. Focused coding allowed me to see which codes were most significant and made the most sense. Once I completed the open coding and focused coding process on each of the three initial transcripts, I combined the transcripts into one document, sorted by each question. I began to look across all three interviews for similarities and frequency in the use of the codes. I asked the questions, what does this mean, what is similar and consistent across all interviews? It was clearly a positive thing to all, but the thought of being active and intentional about integrating such learning in their school was very neutral and/or non-existent. There appeared to be a lack of passion around the thought of, and integration of SEL. A clear theme emerged, and at this point, theoretical sampling seemed appropriate. I identified principals who met the new criteria needed for theoretical sampling. I selected additional participants using the same pre-screening questions, but this time instead of seeking those that answered B (I tend to wait before introducing new curriculum/programs until my colleagues have tried it) or C- (I prefer to wait until all the kinks have been worked out before I introduce new curriculum/programs); I was interested in the contrast, those that answered A- (I am always the first to introduce new curriculum/programs). I was now seeking early adopters. On this round of questioning, I integrated the definition of SEL within the interview protocol questions as well as planned for additional probing questions, if needed. I interviewed three additional participants. During this set of interviews, it somehow ended up that the principals were not available at their actual school. I interviewed each at an alternate location. I completed the interview with the fourth

participant, and had ample time to transcribe and review prior to conducting the fifth and sixth

interviews. The fifth and sixth interviews were conducted on the same day. Once I received the

transcripts from interview four, I read the complete document without making any notes. I then

began the open coding process by writing notes in the margins, as well as underlining comments

and phrases that stood out to me. I then took a break from the document and I didn't return to it

until after I completed interviews five and six, and received the transcripts.   I read the transcripts

of both interview five and six without making notes, just to conceptualize. I then read interview

five and began the open coding process by writing notes in the margins, as well as underlining

comments and phrases that stood out to me. I then left the document for a day or two and

returned to the document to re-read and see if anything new emerged. I then read interview six

and began the open coding process by writing notes in the margins, as well as underlining

comments and phrases that stood out to me. I then left the document down for a day or two and

returned to the document to re-read and see if anything new emerged. I compared the initial

codes of interview four, five and six. I identified the related codes and considered if or how did

any of these codes interact. I began to make decisions about which initial open codes were most

significant, moving more into focused coding. I looked across interviews four, five, and six for

themes. I then went back and combined the coding from interviews one, two, and three with the

coding from interviews four, five, and six to compare by each question. The process of constant

comparative analysis is an iterative process involving weaving in and out of the data to generate

high-level, rich categories (Birks & Mills, 2011).   Ambiguity encompassing knowledge of SEL

led to the next theoretical sampling phase. I turned my attention to interviewing an early adopter

and a late adopter. For this round of interviews, I reviewed all of the questions and selected the

subset that was directly related to SEL for more in-depth interviewing. I chose five words or

phrases that were central to the idea of SEL. The words goal-setting, decision-making, relationship building, emotional regulation and empathy were selected. These key words were placed on index cards. Participants were shown the word, and then asked four questions, specifically related to the word on the card.

Interview questions for which saturation had been reached in the first six interviews were not included in this round of interviews. Omitting these questions provided additional time for probing more deeply with the new questions.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted until saturation was reached. Saturation is the point at which no new themes emerge from the data. The interviews were recorded using an audio digital recorder. The recordings were sent digitally to a local transcription service for professional transcribing. Also, field notes were collected to describe my observations. These observations made in the field have the potential to become rich nuggets of information during analysis. Field notes provide me the opportunity to describe the setting, initial feelings and thoughts, and nonverbal behavior that cannot be captured in the transcription (Birks & Mills, 2011).

Institutional Review Board Approval

Approval of the LSU AgCenter IRB was sought prior to any contact being made with participants. I developed an informed consent to be signed by all participants (see *Appendix A*). Signed consent forms were collected before the interviews began. The informed consent was emailed to participants upon agreement to participate in the study. In addition, I gave a brief overview of the study, and had each participant review and sign prior to the start of the interview. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview protocol which can be found in *Appendices B, C, D, & E.*

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data using handwritten, color coded methods. At first the data was analyzed using initial (open) coding which included a constant comparison of the data to find similarities and differences (Charmaz, 2011). Constant comparison seeks to refine emergent theory (Emmel, 2013). The comparisons allowed me to facilitate higher level conceptual explanations (Emmel, 2013). Open coding allowed me to take a very quick review of the data remaining open to explore whatever theoretical possibilities can be differentiated (Charmaz, 2011). Open coding encourages theoretical sensitivity by exposing variation and process (Emmel, 2013).

After the initial coding process, I then shifted to focused coding which included more directed, selective, and conceptual codes enabling me to synthesize and explain larger segments of data (Charmaz, 2011; Rich, 2012). In focused coding, decisions were made about which initial codes were most significant, and which made the most analytical sense (Charmaz, 2011). Charmaz (2011) warns that moving to focused coding is not totally a linear process and may require the researcher to move back and forth between earlier statements as 'Aha!' moments arise. Theoretical sampling and constant comparison were employed throughout the data collection and data analysis phases of the study. Theoretical sampling involves the emergence of codes derived from the raw data beginning with the initial data collection and continuing through constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1992). The process can be described as "jointly collects, codes, and analyzes…data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop…theory as it emerges" (Glaser and Straus, 1967, p. 45). The opportunity to elaborate and/or refine the categories that are the foundation for your theory is the main purpose and benefit of theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2011).

An independent analyst and I coded the transcripts. Themes were compared and discrepancies were discussed and resolved. We met throughout the data analysis and interpretation process to discuss concerns and insights and to review materials.

In addition to coding, memo writing was an extremely important component of data analysis in grounded theory. Memos are personal reflections, and allowed the opportunity to explore thoughts, feelings, and concerns without having to disclose their innermost thoughts to others (Birks & Mills, 2011). Memos contain both the researcher's insights and analysis of the data (Birks & Mills, 2011), and are used to analyze ideas about the codes throughout the process (Birks & Mills, 2011; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1995). Memos allow the interrogation of the data creating concepts necessary for the construction of theory (Birks & Mills, 2011). It is a non-negotiable component that must be applied, and this application should begin early on in the study prior to the analysis (Birks & Mills, 2011). Birks and Mills (2011) suggest "it is the single most effective mechanism for raising your data to a conceptual level" (p. 41). Memos provide rich ingredients for the written presentation of the research (Birks & Mills, 2011).

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this grounded theory study is one of my primary considerations. At every phase of planning, I have attempted to ensure the creditability, dependability and transferability of the study. My intent was to uphold the integrity of the field through rigorous research processes. In the following sub-sections, I will outline the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility

Keys to providing credibility for a qualitative study can be established by identifying whether the study findings will be accurate and credible from my perspective, the perspective of

the participants, and the perspective of the reader (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Discussing contrary information with colleagues is one way that I have added to the credibility of my interpretation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).   By having colleagues examine field notes, questions were raised that helped me to examine my assumptions and/or consider alternative ways of looking at the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).   Carlson's (2010) assertion that "data should be continually revisited and scrutinized for accuracy of interpretation and for meaningful, coherent conveyance of the participant's narrative contributions" (p. 1105) is a cornerstone of my research process.

      Reflexivity. When researchers are considered a part of the data, rather than separate from it, it is considered reflexivity (Lipson, 1991). There is a debate in grounded theory as to whether the researcher should acknowledge her own preconceptions, values and beliefs and hold them separate (Berger & Kellner, 1981 & Hutchinson, 1993) or integrate her perceptions, values and beliefs into the data (Turner, 1981; Stern, 1994). Integration of perceptions, values and beliefs aligns with my philosophical position. My creativity is an integral part of the inductive process (Cutcliffe, 2000). There is a need for me to bring my values, beliefs and prior knowledge to the surface, but it is equally important for me to not suppress that knowledge, and to allow it to interplay with the data (Cutcliffe, 2000).

Dependability

      Being able to effectively track the process and procedures involved in data collection and data interpretation is related to the dependability of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). When considering dependability "…the goal is not to eliminate inconsistencies but to ensure that the researcher understands when they occur" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012 p. 86).

Audit Trails. Audit trails provides the opportunity to keep careful documentation of all components of the study, with the idea that the reader serves as an external reviewer/auditor of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Carlson, 2010). Detailed and thorough explanations of data collection and data analysis have been provided. Audit trails can include field observation notes, journals (memo-writing), interview notes, calendars and many other forms of interpretation of the data (Carlson, 2010). Also keeping photos, videos and audio tapes on file for three to five years is part of constructing a good audit trail (Carlson, 2010). For the purpose of this study, I used field observation notes, memo-writing, interview notes, and audio tapes as documentation for an audit trail. It is my responsibility to provide the reader with an accurate account and mental picture of the processes involved in the study.

Transferability

Often times, the readers have to simply decide if a study is appropriate for their needs. Transferability allows readers insight into how well the study has made it possible for them to decide if the research consists of processes that would work in their setting or particular area of interest (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Thick and Rich Descriptions. In qualitative research, I am not as concerned with generalization or replication as I am the corroboration and substantiation of findings beyond the context of the study over time and across similar situations (Carlson, 2010). The use of thick and rich descriptions is a way to draw the reader in, to evoke feelings for and a sense of connection with the participants, and provide an element of shared or vicarious experiences (Carlson, 2010; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). In addition, thick and rich descriptions can provide understanding of relevance to other settings for the reader (Carlson, 2010), allowing them to map out how this study may apply to their setting. I have provided a very detailed account of the

settings encountered, the participants, and the procedures used for data collection and analysis (Carlson, 2010).

Ethical Considerations

Potential ethical issues could arise if proper procedures were not followed. There are no known ethical issues identified for this study. Participants have signed an informed consent document. Also, the following measures were used to ensure confidentiality. In keeping with privacy rights and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used rather than the principal's name. The records indicating participation in this study have been kept private. Throughout and upon completion of the research, the electronic records are being kept in a password protected file on my computer, and the hard copies are being kept in a locked file cabinet.

Limitations of the Study

As with any research, there are limitations.   However, these limitations do not lessen the essence of the study's findings and implications. A limitation of this study was the characteristically constructivist nature of its content and methodology. Which allowed much room for interpretation. With that in mind, some may view my lens as a researcher as a deterrent. Given my work in the area of character development, my own experiences were also relevant to the study. However, I believe this was an enhancement to the study, but understand that some may not agree.

Another limitation was the point of saturation was reached with eight interviews. There is little consensus on how many interviews adequately inform theory building (Charmaz, 2006). Purposeful sampling allowed for the selection of participants who thoroughly conveyed their experiences with SEL. Saturation involved sampling until no unique content emerged and the

data collection began to stagnate. My determination of sufficient saturation manifested in the

data as revealed through the eight interviews, memo writing, and field notes.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There is little known about the beliefs and attitudes of principals as it relates to social and emotional learning. This deficiency of knowledge can be seen as a barrier when considering that principals are often bombarded and faced with making decisions related to providing their teachers and children the best possible programs geared towards optimal success. Information related to principals' beliefs and attitudes could aid program developers in creating viable programs that are tailored towards specific needs and preferences. Due to this lack of information, we may be missing out on simple strategies that can target those beliefs and essentially provide an avenue to increase the integration of SEL skills in schools. Currently, schools may be addressing some of the identified competencies, while missing others. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore school principals' beliefs and attitudes about SEL. The central questions of this study were, "what past experiences influence the way principals view SEL, what positive and negative judgments do principals make about SEL, and what social supports would cause principals to integrate and champion SEL?"

The purpose of this chapter is to detail the analysis of data and present the results of that analysis. Participant selection and demographics are detailed. As results are presented, direct quotations are included. Interviews were coded independently by two analysts. In addition, each participant was provided a pseudonym in which the data is presented.   The participants appear here in the order in which the interviews occurred.

Participant Descriptions

Valerie

The first interview was conducted with Valerie, a middle-aged, white female from a Northwest Louisiana city. I arrived thirty minutes early. I sat in my car nervous about this first interview. It was the beginning of my data collection journey. I took in the many feelings of anxiousness, anxiety, excitement and fear. The small school was nestled in a quiet community. I may have seen three cars pass within the twenty minutes I spent in the car. Finally it was time for me to walk into the building. The older, external appearance of the building left much to be desired. Was that an indication of what awaited inside? As I entered the building, I couldn't help but notice the understated décor. There was no evidence of the school motto, mascot, or anything indicating who they were. What was their identity? Upon entering the building, the staff addressed me in not a rude way, but also not overly welcoming. I was still a bit early, so the secretary asked me to wait in the lobby. As I sat there, I couldn't help but notice the many group photos of current and former staff. It appeared that the school lacked diversity in staffing. I wondered if the staff was representative of the school's population. The entrance to the actual classrooms were isolated on both sides. The doors leading to both hallways were locked, and teachers, students and staff had to be buzzed in. I could hear the chatter of students, but could not see any. Two or three teachers entered the lobby area without speaking to me. I had to wonder how that would make me feel as a parent or potential parent, student or volunteer at the school. As one student entered the office area, I witnessed the principal share a moment of excitement, rejoicing about some work that the student had completed, and made sure to tell him she was proud of him. He left the office gleaming with pride. Her connection with the student made me feel at ease about the interview to come.

Valerie has been principal at the current school for 6 years. It was clear that she was a nice person; however, it was also clear that she was a little perplexed about why I was there. Her handshake was a little timid. It was as if she felt I was there to check up on her. Once the interview began and I asked the mission of her school, she was not comfortable conveying the answer without actually pulling out the exact words. Throughout the interview, it was evident that this principal was concerned with giving the "right" answers, and being helpful even though I had assured her there were no right or wrong answers. She was constantly asking "Am I on the right track here?"

Two things stood out about Valerie was that she used somewhat of a dictatorship approach whereby teachers would have to prove to her if something is not working before she would consider discontinuing, and she used the terms "our" overall. When referring to students it was "the student" and "my teachers". This suggests to me that she acknowledges that the students are everyone's responsibility, and she is somewhat disconnected, but she feels the teachers are hers.

In reflecting on the interview, I recognized that I should focus on being more personable, and not so matter of fact. After the first interview, it was clear that the principal was not familiar with the concept of SEL. Therefore, it truly affected her ability to respond to the remaining questions. I wondered if the questions I had would garner the information I needed. For this reason it became evident that I needed some sort of backup plan or different line of questioning for those not familiar with the concept. Very little detail was provided during this interview.

Rita

The second interview was conducted with Rita, an older, white female from a Northwest Louisiana city. I arrived at the second location approximately thirty minutes early. This school

was located right off the interstate with no community clearly in sight. As I sat in the car, there were many, many cars passing the school. I noticed a fitness trail for students, along with school signs. The outer appearance of the building was a little more recent and contemporary. The outside door was locked, and visitors must be buzzed in. Upon entering the school, I immediately felt the welcoming environment. The school halls were beautifully painted with murals, and other colorful art. As I walked into the office, a male student held the door open for me. The staff was very nice and inviting. The aroma in the office smelled really good and was very calming. I let the secretary know I had a meeting with the principal. She informed me to have a seat and the principal would be with me in a minute. As I sat in the office, I witnessed several teachers enter. Every teacher spoke and gave a pleasant smile as they entered the office. The child sitting in the office opened and closed the door for everyone that entered without being told to do so, and he was thanked every time. It seemed like the school operated as a family. They were their own little village. I noticed a sign in the office that stated -*Excellence is the tradition*.

Rita came out to welcome me in her office. They were having some problems with the air, so she let me know there may be some interruptions while the maintenance man worked to address the issue. Rita was very nice, and remained very open and inviting the entire interview. Rita had been principal at this school for six years, and she has thirty-six years total experience in education. As we delved into the interview, it became apparent that this principal was aware of and familiar with some concepts of SEL. Had my worry about the appropriateness of the questions been all for nothing? Had this solidified the thought that I may not need to change the questions, rather I may just need to have a backup for those not familiar with SEL. I did make note that this school has a new military grant with a focus on SEL, which could have possibly

heightened her awareness, but throughout the interview she provided indication of SEL practices being implemented at the school.

Rita's wants the children happy, but is truly concerned with academic rigor. She feels that the most effective strategy for SEL is through instruction, and she relates SEL to Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) and other issues. She was also clearly concerned about loss of instructional time with her teachers.

Cherie

The third interview was conducted with Cherie, an older, white female from a Northwest Louisiana city. I arrived at the school approximately thirty minutes early. This school was a very old school situated in a community. There was open access to the school, even beyond the office. Upon entering the office, the secretary was nice and quickly addressed me. She let me know that the principal was in a meeting and would be with me soon. I had to wait at least twenty minutes beyond the scheduled time for the principal to complete her meeting with a teacher. During this time, as other teachers and staff entered the office, they did not speak, and did not seem welcoming. The décor of the office left much to be desired. They did however have their [mascot] code poster along with the motto and rules for the school clearly displayed. One student came in with a minor injury and the secretary took care of it. She was very attentive and caring, and provided support for the student.

Cherie came out to welcome me in her office. She was a breath of fresh air. Even though, she was a little under the weather, she was still very inviting and welcoming. Cherie has thirty-two years of experience in education and 16 years of experience at her current school. Six years as a counselor and ten years as the principal. Cherie is planning to retire at the end of this school year.

A few thoughts about this principal were she entered the study as a late majority adopter based on her screening response. However, she showed signs of being further along in the *Diffusion of Innovation Model*, making her more of an early majority adopter, but not quite an early adopter. She was familiar with SEL, and there were many SEL strategies happening at the school. However, I think overall she equates SEL to emotionally and mentally challenged and/or troubled students and unwanted behaviors. You could tell she cared about the students. This only intensified throughout the interview. She got emotional several times throughout the interview when discussing children and some of the struggles. She uses terms "my" instruction coordinator; calls students friends; uses the term "we" when addressing issues which lets me know she feels a part of. She trusts teachers and empowers them to make sound decisions and choices about their classroom and instruction. Her goals are: providing a safe place for the students and staff; producing lifelong learners; and providing opportunities to make sound choices.

Sharon

The fourth interview was conducted with Sharon, an older, white female from a Northwest Louisiana city. Sharon was a recently retired principal (within 6 months). The interview was held at a hotel lobby in Baton Rouge because she happened to be in town. It was first thing in the morning and we sat in the business center, a small area with two computers. The business area itself was pretty quiet, but it was very close to the breakfast dining area, which presented a problem with noise during the earlier part of the interview.

Before the interview I explained to Sharon that the interview was to garner her thoughts and opinions about the series of questions to be asked. I assured her there were no right or wrong answers, only her truths. Sharon has twenty-eight years of service to education. She

57

spent her initial years as a teacher, then five years as a gifted instructor. Of the twenty-eight years, fourteen years were in administration. She was the assistant principal at another community school for four years, assistant principal at her current school for one year, and principal for nine years.

Even though the interview was not held her school, I did make a visit to the school when I was in the area in March. The school is located almost in the center of a Northwest Louisiana parish. It is, also, right in the center of a neighborhood with a small church located across the street. Driving up, the school yard is fenced completely around the school building facility. There is a walking track which I learned was installed as part of the Safe Routes to School grant. The marquee sign in the front of the school boasted recognition of student achievements. Upon entering the school lobby, you must check in with the receptionist before being admitted through secured doors which allows access to the school population. The receptionist was quick to recognize visitors. As the lobby got crowded, the assistant principal assisted with traffic. As teachers visited the office area, they asked visitors if they were in need of assistance. Everyone was very pleasant. I sat and waited on one of the two pews (church style benches) in the lobby area. There was a bulletin board in the lobby highlighting the student's accelerated reader points, by class.

Sharon was very knowledgeable about some of the initial ground work with emotional intelligence. In addition, she was very much a proponent for the need for more SEL opportunities in the educational field. She indicated several times the need for this to be recognized as a field in education.   She mentioned the current emphasis being placed on mental health and that she thought it would be a benefit if that could be shifted to SEL, it would be

much more beneficial. She acknowledged that the reason it is so tough is because it can't really be quantified. She is big on professional development and professional competence.

Alan

The fifth interview was conducted with Alan, a young, white male from Southeast Louisiana city. Alan has been the principal at this school for four years. The school is situated in the heart of Central City. Alan described the area as an incredible neighborhood and community. It is a part of the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) which is a nationwide, non-profit network of college-preparatory, public charter schools. The school was founded for underserved, mainly African American youth, fifth through eighth grade. Over the past three or four years they have been the highest performing open enrollment school in the city academically.

The interview was held during the Mardi Gras holiday at one of the sister schools. The youth were out, but the teachers had staff development training. As I was headed to the city the morning of the interview, I received an email from Alan. Immediately I knew there had been a communication breakdown. Alan was under the assumption that the interview would be by phone and had no idea I was headed there to meet with him. I immediately picked up the phone to call. I apologized for the miscommunication, but let Alan know it would really be great for us to meet in person. He agreed to meet with me since I was already headed there to meet with another principal. Upon arriving at the school, I waited for about thirty minutes for Alan to arrive in the lobby. There were many staff members in and out of the lobby. Everyone I encountered at the school was extremely nice and very accommodating. These were teachers from ten different schools within that charter structure, but it seemed as though everyone was familiar with one another.   We searched for a free room to have our interview, but due to the

staff training breakout sessions, there were none to be found. We settled on the teacher's lounge which seemed fairly empty at the time we walked in, but we soon found out that was probably not the best idea. During our walk, I explained to Alan why I was interested in principals' thoughts and opinions about SEL. He seemed to be a free-spirited type person and had no reservations about the interview. He did however, seem a little rushed. He was truly ready to join his staff in their professional development training. As soon as we began, several people walked into the lounge to chat with each other, and to use the copy machine. I was definitely distracted from the beginning. I have to admit that by the end of this interview, I was a little aggravated due to the distractions. In addition to the many outside interruptions, a man came up while we were talking and had a conversation with Alan, and several announcements were made over the intercom. Alan was visibly ready to be done with the interview as he constantly shifted in his chair, and looked around the room at others. As soon as the interview was completed, Alan left expeditiously.

Even though the interview was not held at the school, I did make a visit to the school when I was in the New Orleans area. The school is set up in a way that seems intentionally to be protective of the students.   This is important since there is a public park directly behind the school. As I toured the school, I did however notice several bullets that had pierced the school windows. There is a bus lane that is gated at both ends and provides direct access from the bus to the school without interaction with the public or street.   There is a very strong college-prep presence.   There are college pennants hanging in the halls of the school. Additionally, each homeroom teacher's classroom is named after the college or university the teacher attended.

Alan takes extreme pride in his school and truly believes they are the best. He believes being the best is predicated on having the right people in place and always having a shared vision

at the forefront. He also believes kids have their own identity and have to understand how to relate to others. He acknowledges that the debate among the community is not should social-emotional development be taught, the debate is how.

Kevin

The sixth interview was conducted with Kevin, a mid-age, white male from a Southeast Louisiana city. Kevin has been the principal at this school for eight years, and has been in education for thirteen years. The school is in the Central City community. It is also a part of the KIPP public charter schools. The school was for underserved, mainly African American youth, K-fourth grade.

The interview was held during the Mardi Gras break at one of the sister schools as suggested by Kevin. The youth were out, but the teachers had staff development. This was my second time at the school in one day. Everyone I encountered at the school was extremely nice and very accommodating. The teachers were from ten different schools within that charter structure, but it seemed as though everyone sort of knew each other.   Kevin came and found me in the lobby. We then went to the gym area. There were two other people in there having a discussion, but the gym was large enough that it was not a distraction. We grabbed two chairs in the back and began the interview.

Even though the interview was not held at the school, I did make a visit to the school when I was in the area. As I drove up, two things stood out to me; there was a corner/liquor store on one corner less than a block away from the school, and there was an awesome view of a city sports arena on the other corner. As a sports fan, it was really a treat. The school is set up in a way that seemed to intentionally be protective of the students. There were no windows on the perimeter of the school. There is a school playground yard that is encased inside of the school

building. This set up initially reminded me of prison yards as seen on television. Even still, the strides the school has made to make the environment youth-friendly and fun are to be commended. There was clear evidence of intentional efforts to beautify the campus. The playground boosted bright, exuberant colors, areas with newly planted trees, self-created grassy mounds, and more. All classrooms were filled inside and outside with visuals.   The visuals were a variety of learning goals, inspirations, and recognitions. Each classroom was set up in a cooperative learning setting. I visited the facility with a parent of one of their former students, and during the random conversations with teachers, I observed the use of much of the restorative language Kevin had discussed during his interview. This to me signifies, it is a way of life at this school and not just talk.   It appears that both teachers and students take pride in their school and feel connected. The stairwells and walls were covered with inspirational quotes and quotes to support their school acronym.

A few things that stood out about Kevin was; there is a close race for who he considers his number one stakeholders between the teachers and the students, he believes the fact that SEL and character education are seen as an add on is a major part of the problem, and his main concern is the response by teachers and adults towards student.

Lorraine

The seventh interview was conducted with Lorraine, a middle-aged, black female from a Southeast Louisiana city. Lorraine has been principal at her current school for three years and has been in education for twenty-three years. I arrived early, but instead of sitting in the car a while, I went into the school. It was yet another interview, but I still possessed an unexplained nervousness. Questions flooded my mind such as: Will I garner pertinent information? Will it be data that may provide insight into my objectives? The school was located towards the back of an

established neighborhood. The school seemed to be almost sectioned off. The school was in a seemingly newer building with contemporary architectural structures. The marquee outside the school contained the school name. The electronic scroll on the marquee highlighted announcements and student achievement. The hallways were very clean and colorful. The office had the vision and mission as well as the strategic goals clearly posted. The office was a nice size, very neat and clean. The janitor was sitting in the front office when I arrived. She was very friendly and helpful. The secretary took my name and let the principal know I was there. In the meantime, several students and parents came in the office. Parents were allowed to go to the classroom and pick up the student. I wondered if this was only because it was the last few days of school, or if it was a normal practice.

Lorraine came to the office and waved me back. Lorraine was very nice but stoic. She was professionally dressed. She seemed extremely busy. A few thoughts about Lorraine was that she is very concerned about the increase in mental health issues, and the lack of parental involvement.

Ned

The eighth interview was conducted with Ned, a middle-aged, black male from a Southeast Louisiana city. Ned has been the principal for six years at his current school, and has been in education for sixteen years. I pulled up to the school situated in the heart of the neighborhood a little early so I sat in the car to get my mind focused. It was a smaller school with older brick, and an older structure. There was no marquee outside, but a sign that read no guns on campus at the entrance. Upon entering the building, it was very welcoming. The halls were filled with greenery and decorations. The walls were covered with youth created art work and murals. The front office was extremely busy, but everyone was very nice, helpful, and

63

welcoming. Smiles were everywhere I turned. I had to wait in the front office for a little while

because the principal was in a meeting. While waiting, I recognized one of my classmates from

college. We talked for a while until principal Ned came out. When he came, she introduced us

and told him to take care of me. It turns out we attended rivalry colleges, so we joked about that.

Ned and I then went into his office. Ned was very well-groomed. He was dressed casual but

neat.

A few things that stood out about Ned were that he desired something more than what

PBIS provided; he had no problem making a decision even if it's not the popular decision among

his staff; his decisions are meaningful, calculated, and strategic; and he considers himself a

master of manipulation.

Overarching Themes

Lack of Passion for SEL

After the initial three interviews with Valerie, Rita and Cherie, the concept of lack of

passion emerged. "Passion is defined as a strong inclination toward an activity that people like,

that they find important, and in which they invest time and energy" (Vallerand & Houlfant, 2003,

p.175). This concept was underpinned by neutral attitudes and no strong feelings or beliefs

regarding SEL. While Valerie and Rita held a clear cut neutral attitude about SEL, Cherie

seemed to have an attitude more towards being positive, but not overly excited about what SEL

embodied. Therefore, the idea of late adopters having neutral to mild feelings regarding SEL

was an area of emergence. Even with this lack of enthusiasm regarding SEL, each participant

mentioned that they do feel it is important. While it may be important, there is no urgency to

integrate the SEL components into the day to day functioning of the school. Rita mentioned as

she shrugged her shoulders and tilted her head, "you know, I'm open to that" as if saying I would

do this if I had to, or it would be great if someone else would do this. This lack of passion lead

to the first theoretical sampling characteristic to be explored. There was a need to interview

participants that were known for having success, a variety of programs, and were passionate in

their duties as observed by outside agency representatives. This time participants were selected

using the same pre-screening questions, but were characterized by those that answered as early

adopters instead of late majority adopters. I was interested in the contrast of those who have

been perceived as being passionate/early adopters with those that were late majority adopters,

and had unknowingly displayed an idea of neutrality in their interviews.

The main differences between the fourth through sixth interview with the passionate

principals and that of the initial interviews was that passionate principals possessed an attitude of

intentionality and empowerment. The principals in this group, Sharon, Alan, and Kevin

provided the message that while SEL is undervalued, it is important and much needed. With this

group of participants, it is not just an unreachable goal in the sky, it is something they are

striving to make happen. They are actively planning, seeking and engaging in new programming

opportunities. Kevin gave an example below of his outreach that paid off tremendously

regarding a program that was in its' fourth year of implementation:

> I contacted Tools of The Mind and talked to them about what their program looks like. It
> was clear that it wasn't necessarily a direct fit with what we were currently doing. So,
> what we did was, I arranged for an assessment of what their classrooms would look like,
> versus what ours would, so we had a consultant out, and really assess whether it was the
> right fit, or not. Once she came in and we talked about some of the adjustments that this
> would mean to our teaching, it was very clear that it was a direction we were excited
> about going in. So, we had scoped out what a partnership would look like. The problem
> was, it was a cost far more than any of us had budgeted for professional development. So
> I did two things; I searched out other schools across the city who would be interested in
> also taking advantage of the program, which would allow us to split the cost; we did find
> one school in our network that was really excited by the opportunity. So we partnered
> with them. That got us almost there, and then I enlisted organizations, uh, a development
> team to go after a very specific grant, and they were able to secure a three-year grant for
> us. That allowed us to do the program. We're really excited about what it brings to our

school. I think it's one of the most important things that we have as a school and, it's working out really well. We're also getting some of, we've definitely increased our academic achievement.

The main questions for them was "how can we make this happen", not if it can happen. How do I select the best program for my school environment? As mentioned earlier, Cherie, showed attributes of the non-passionate and passionate participants. Cherie and Sharon both feel it is important to stay up to date on what needs to be shared with teachers. Cherie believes being very open with teachers has worked well for her. She tells the teachers things, that she may or may not need to, but she doesn't want them in the dark. Sharon echoes that sentiment by stating,

> I don't need to wait to be told by the district this is the new change, then tell my teachers three months after. We've got one year to deal with these kids, and make a difference, so it's my job to stay ahead of the curve.

It's clear by these few examples that this group embodies more of a let's make a plan and get it done type approach. Knowing is half the battle. If they know what is to come, then they can prepare.

Empowering teachers was also a characteristic seen in this group that was not present in the earlier interviews. Alan shared an example of that, "There's always different folks in the building who have different passions, and then we try to give them the space to lead, and then expand throughout the school." In line with that, Sharon says, "I want teachers to be able to come to the answer that I hadn't thought of…I want them to be able to arrive at different ways of doing things, and you have to be willing to let them do that." Cherie empowers her teachers to lead trainings at the school, lead teams, and seek other professional development opportunities. She stated, "If your peers are talking about it, you're more, I think they will buy in to being a part of it." Cherie provides an intentional strategy for empowering her teachers.

Lack of a Clear Understanding of a SEL Definition

At the conclusion of conducting and analyzing the first six interviews, it became clear that the principals did not possess a clear definition of SEL, and maybe that was a hindrance toward arriving at beliefs. This held true whether it was a passionate principal or a non-passionate principal. Across the board, principals were noticeably not familiar with the term SEL. They were familiar with some of the concepts related to SEL, but they were not familiar with the actual terminology and definition. When asked to define SEL, all principals focused on the two words social and emotional and then tried to tie their definition to those words, or they used the words social and/or emotional to define SEL. This lack of understanding supports many of the issues previously identified in the field of SEL. According to CASEL (2003),

> Social and emotional learning involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (p. 1).

Principals often used the words social and emotional to define SEL, but could not really give any other strong examples of what that means. When asked what SEL means to them, principals had a wide variety of responses ranging from "I don't know" to "It's everything". Valerie had a look of confusion, and just did not know what I was talking about at all. She was clearly uncomfortable as she searched for a way to define SEL. Rita defined it as "learning how to handle your emotions so that you can function in a socially appropriate way." Cherie said, "I think you have to teach kids where they are." She acknowledges that not all kids come with the same backgrounds and foundations. Similar to Cherie, using your whole brain was the theme of Sharon's answer "…all kids have a different way to be reached, but you need to be able to look at this child's social being, and learn how to deal with this child." This echoes the thought of an

67

individualized approach. Alan teeter on the individualized idea, but also was heavily interested in relationships as he stated "The kids have to know their own identity and have to understand how to relate to people to be successful." Kevin focused more on the response of teachers and staff. He insists "The biggest piece of it is making sure the adults in the building are responding to students in a way that's kind of building off their social skills and emotional resiliency." This wide range of understanding is clearly one of the barriers in getting to the beliefs of the principals. Beliefs are derived from an individual's understanding. This understanding may be an accurate or inaccurate representation, yet regardless, that understanding will drive beliefs. That being said, if principals lack the understanding of a clear definition, the ambiguity of it all affects their beliefs and in turn their actions related to SEL. Was the phrase SEL a hindrance in getting to attitudes and beliefs? What happens if the questions are built around the definition, irrespective of the phrase? In other words, would the answers change or remain the same if the key phrase "social and emotional learning" was not used during the interviews? This line of questioning led to the next phase of theoretical sampling. This time instead of a change in participant type, there was a change in the content and structure of the interview questions. For this set of interviews, an additional passionate principal (Ned) and an additional non-passionate principal (Lorraine) were selected. During this phase of theoretical sampling, participants were interviewed using a series of key words related to SEL. Instead of asking if principals were familiar with SEL or what it means to them, principals were shown an index card of a word or phrase. They were then asked a series of questions related to that word or phrase, but the question focused specifically on student skill building. The words used were empathy, decision-making, relationship building, emotional regulation and goal-setting.

The interesting things about interviews seven and eight was that even though the questions changed, the way in which Lorraine (non-passionate) and Ned (passionate) answered still aligned with the differences identified earlier between passionate versus non-passionate. With the way in which the questions were presented for these two participants, their perspective on school responsibility surfaced as an area of interest. The following question was included in the interviews for each word or phrase: What is the school's role in building this skill in students? Overwhelming, both felt the school has a huge role in building SEL skills in students. Lorraine exclaimed, it's a "major role…ultimately it's my schools' responsibility." She went on to describe the importance of proper knowledge, competence and professional development of staff are key. Lorraine boldly stated, "I believe the school is probably 90% responsible in today's time." While Ned described,

> The biggest role that we have is that we take those standards that are set by the BESE [Board of Elementary and Secondary Education], or by whomever, federal regulation, and that our role is to make sure that over time, it may not be one year, but over time the students that we're servicing get to the point where the decisions that we make on programs, decisions that we make on, um, skill, how we teach those skills, they're correct and we have a body in the bank that we can rely on that we know makes those students successful.

Neither of these participants shied away from the reality that the schools have a huge responsibility. While both indicated it should be a joint effort between home and school, they acknowledge that the responsibility percentage is very heavily tilted towards the school. Due to the ever changing societal dynamics and environments in which children are exposed, the roles seem to be reversed. The old way of thinking was that as it relates to social and emotional aspects of life, children were learning those things at home and the schools were simply reinforcing the skill building. Today it seems that in many cases, school is the only place that children are exposed to these important skill building opportunities. Ned referred to the term "in

loco parentis", meaning in the place of the parent, and indicated that from the time children enter the campus, schools are responsible for doing the job that the parents should be doing. He does believe that in some cases, children are receiving this skill building both at home and school. However, in most cases, it is only during the school hours. Similarly, when asked what words describe how you feel about your school's responsibility for integrating? Ned simply stated, "It's our job, it's what we do." He went on to explain that no matter what skill it is, everyday decisions must be made to make children learn and that is the school's responsibility. Essentially he said there has to be established practices and a depth of knowledge.

SEL Infancy

After completion of the eight interviews, it became clear that SEL as a whole was too much in it's infancy as it relates to school integration. Between early adopters and late majority adopters, SEL has not been an area that principals have thought of, or fully explored. Granted, certain skills of SEL were definitely at the forefront of most school programming, but specific plans to integrate SEL as a means to improve the school as a whole was scarce. So while there was pertinent information garnered during these interviews, a theory explaining principal's attitudes and beliefs cannot be established at this time. There may be many factors that contribute to the lack of the useful data needed to generate a theory. My analysis is that there has just not been enough exposure to a structured approach to SEL. The idea is so nuanced that the gamut of principals are still novice in this arena. Without the basic knowledge of a definition and a clear understanding, it is very hard to derive a belief about SEL. Even though a theory explaining principal's beliefs and attitudes about SEL did not emerge, themes in the data did stand out.

Acknowledged Importance of SEL

Overall, based on their limited knowledge, the attitude of the principals regarding SEL ranged from neutral to positive. Reiterated throughout the interviews was the fact that each participant indicated SEL was important. Valerie, acknowledged the important part social and emotional learning plays in student success. She said, "I think it really is important for the children to get those things, and to have pride in themselves, and that positive thinking." Rita suggested that SEL in the school is definitely appropriate. She contends that mandates such as PBIS has forced schools to begin to look at how to include it in purposeful ways. Cherie eagerly offered, "I think it is awesome…I think we do a lot of that here already." She added that it is really important. Sharon believes it is important and definitely needed. She touted, "It needs to be a recognized field within education…it needs to be brought to the forefront." Kevin acknowledges the importance of SEL, but insists that it is very difficult to balance as he states the following, "it's super important, but you are also driven as a teacher by the deadlines of next week's assessment, or next week's Mardi Gras parade, or student's achievement ceremony, or whatever it is."

Even though they all indicated SEL was important, I found that each of them related the integration of SEL to something different. They each had a different view of what that was. Valerie related it to leadership, having positive roles and positive thinking. Rita, was more engulfed in those that have social challenges, behavioral issues, and may present themselves as disruptive. Cherie, focused more on individual learning and making good choices. As she says, "I think the part about choices, to me that is so important, because you have to make choices every day in your life, and we have to give children the skills and the tools to make the choices that are the best for them." Sharon insisted the education community needed to shift from the

intervention side to being more proactive on the prevention side as she stated, "If we would segue this interest in mental health at the young age into social emotional intelligence, it would so benefit the educational community…instead they're looking at the negative side of it, of what happens when kids get derailed." Alan sees it as something that should be integrated throughout the curriculum and the entire school day. He explained the following, "There is a section in the lesson plan for that, to count that in terms of why, what are the why key points, how does this fit in the kid's lives, what are the essential understandings or questions that are supposed to permeate throughout your entire unit." Kevin sees SEL as an investment with a payoff that may be way down the road. This presents a problem for administrative stakeholders. He explained, "You spend time on it today, it might not, it's gonna be time today for something in the future that you don't get to see."

The importance of SEL is a shared sentiment by all principals. Conversely, the importance of how they see SEL integration actually playing out at their school varies. This indicates that SEL is important for many different reasons, and honestly the reasons presented are all valid reasons. One thing to note is that principals are only seeing it from their perspective and their individualized lens, and therefore, they are picking and choosing the components they feel apply to their school community. They are relying on aspects which they can visualize and have seen prior success.

Principals Feelings of SEL

The principals' feelings regarding SEL ranged from feeling good to feeling sad. Feelings are a key attribute linked to the affective component of attitudes. The way a principal feels about SEL can shape their attitude regarding their response toward SEL integration. From the interviews and observations, it appeared that all participants were kind and cared about their

students, staff and their school as a whole. Even though their approach and strategies were different, I never questioned their level of caring. Everyone seemed interested in doing what they felt was best for their people. The reality is some principals were just a little more proactive about doing so. Valerie feels good about the idea of SEL, however she seeks affirmation as she states "...it's a good feeling because I know that it's teaching children lots of values, and it's you know it's teaching children how to think positively about their emotions, and things like that. Am I on the right track here?" She feels it is needed, and that her school conducts some of that, but not as often as needed. She admits it would be a wonderful thing, but says "I think our teachers do a good job in the classroom at teaching as much of it as they can." Cherie feels it's needed and stated "We do a pretty good job here. I think there's more things that we can do." Cherie contends that teachers these days are not exposed to various experiences during their educational preparation for teaching. She indicates this creates a discord when teachers are actually placed in certain settings. Cherie believes the following regarding current training, "what you're taught is not what you get when you walk through the door." Sharon just wished it was a valued aspect of education.

Past Experiences Influence Attitudes and Beliefs

While research suggests that feelings and attitudes are often shaped by past experiences that does not seem to be the case in this study. Among the first three interviews it was clear that they had so few past experiences with SEL that it felt as though they were grasping to understand exactly what I was talking about. Initially, there appeared to be varying degrees of understanding, as understanding was illustrated in some responses to latter questions during the interviews. Aforementioned, there was almost a neutral attitude when it came to social and emotional learning in their school. There were no strong feelings or emotions connected to SEL.

Past experiences may drive a person's attitudes or feelings towards something. As principals explained some of their programs, one thing to note is there were definite examples of SEL integration, however, principals did not connect them as being SEL in many instances. Valerie, who indicated she did not know about SEL was an advocate for the program the Leader in Me, which has strong SEL components built into the program. Therefore, in some instances these past experience examples came out throughout the interview and not necessarily when asked specifically about past experiences. In most cases it was coincidental. While I've already summarized that attitudes were neutral to positive, deeper analysis reveals that there are mainly two different approaches that past experiences fall into, global and individual. The idea of global programming experiences include specific, already developed programs that have been used by others. Whereas the idea of individual level strategies include specific strategies principals and staff have used to work with a child one on one.

Global level past experiences. There were many examples of global experiences that surfaced. Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) was mentioned across all interviews. This is not shocking since PBIS is one system that all schools in Louisiana are required to implement. In addition, programs such as *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Kids*, *Whole Brain, Kagan Cooperative Learning, Tools of the Mind, Matters of the Heart*, *The Leader in Me,* and *Second Step* had been implemented. Kevin summarized the sentiments of others perfectly when he indicated that the school has tried many social skill curriculums in the past and just have not really been successful. He said, "We've either failed on the implementation side or the training side." "It's really hard to balance all of those things, and respond to the demands of what our academic pressures are, as well." Lorraine echoed this sentiment as she stated "The programs they have had in the past have been helpful, but hard to implement." Often times, the programs

74

were incorporated in library, physical education, art, and other ancillary classes. Kevin indicated the following, "The places we have had success, it's been because we're able to frame things we're already doing anyway as really important to student development, like developing as a well-rounded individual." Kevin was very interested in the fact that I was using the word integration.   He believes the fact that SEL, character education are seen as an add-on is a major part of the problem. Kevin explained, "I think one of the limiting factors of effectiveness of a second steps curriculum, PATHS, like some of the social curriculums that are out there is that it feels like something separate from what we're doing otherwise, so it feels like an add-on for teacher."

  Individual level past experience. The implementation of PBIS requires a lot of individual level strategies to be established. One main individual-level strategy attributed to PBIS is the development of the school's values code. For Ned, Rita, and Kevin, this implementation of their core values were evident. At Rita's school the use of [school core values acronym] which is an acronym for [school core values phrase] is implemented and recognized by all. There is dialogue and planning around the use of this acronym. Rita stated, "I know that when I deal with a discipline issue and when our assistant principal does, we are constantly referring to our [school core values acronym] expectations and our core values". For Kevin's school, he incorporates [school core values acronym] with his students and the PERMA model with his staff. [School core values acronym] is an acronym for [school core values phrase]. PERMA an acronym for P-positive emotions, E-engagement, R-positive relationships, M-meaning, and A-achievement is a model of happiness and it is how Kevin's staff are trained to respond. Kevin's approach with the staff is through the lens of PERMA as he stated,

   I think PERMA encapsulates our thoughts about how we concretely think about social-
   emotional learning. PERMA language has really helped us because we say PERMA, a

teacher knows exactly what is meant. If we say, share a PERMA story from the week the teacher knows, like where did I get joy this week, where did I see a student achieve, how did I achieve deeper meaning in my work.

From there, the individual strategies seemed to vary. For instance, Valerie's past experiences with SEL focused on the use of leadership at her school. She mentioned,

> We give leadership roles, like when we have any type of important assembly, like even our awards assemblies, we have greeters that greet our people that come in; we have like children that will introduce our guests; they will lead the pledge; they will lead our pride song; they lead, I mean we can go just on. You know, and so it's different children all the time that are, that do these things, and so it makes them feel important, and it makes them feel like I'm someone.

Cherie's approach was more about the whole family, as one of the strategies she used was signing papers for youth because she knows their parents are busy working.   She explained,

> I mean I sign as mom all the time for teachers, for kids, because some of my teachers are rigid like that, and they want to know, the point is to make sure the parent saw the paper. Well, if my mom is asleep and she's worked three jobs, if I go wake her up she's gonna hit me, I'm not gonna go get my paper signed.

Alan then discussed past experiences from the standpoint of implementation of new extra-curricular activities. He considers his focus on the use of extracurricular activities as an avenue of SEL integration.   He started a tackle football team, the first ever at the school, and have 40 boys practicing after school every single day. The team actually won the city championship this year. This and other extra-curricular activities allow kids to learn how to interact with others, and to be disciplined, hard workers. He stated, "The kids have to know their own identity and have to understand how to relate to people to be successful."

For Lorraine and Ned, the question was asked more specific to their past experiences building the skills in youth. Lorraine's focused on the fact that she has always worked in inner city schools. However, she acknowledged that her current school while it is inner city and has its' own issues, the issues are more mental illness related versus her last school which was more

gang violence, gun violence, and drugs. Lorraine explains "I've had situations where I have had to do a lot of helping students to figure out what's the best decision regardless of whatever situation may be coming." Ned on the other hand drew mainly on his personal past experiences and he focused on when he was in school or when he was in the classroom teaching and how they relates or translates into his experiences today. As he indicates "…when you start off, you're coming from book information and it's not book…you know...it's nothing like what you would, or what you believe even in student teaching." He discussed his evolution to where he is today by stating "I had to grow and evolve from the basics of what I knew in order to kind of become a master of manipulation." No matter how the individual approaches for past experiences were presented, it was evident that all principals have had some interactions with strategies related to SEL skill building, whether they identified it as such or not.

Social Influence on Principals

Principals are charged with working with the full gamut of stakeholders; including students, school board members, parents, policy makers, teachers, support staff, and colleagues. Social cognitive theory describes a three-way relationship between environmental factors, behavior, and personal factors (Bandura, 1989). These are things that influence perceptions and actions. People learn by watching and then making a choice to replicate, alter, or ignore the observed action. The desire for knowledge allows learners to retain the most significant aspects of the observation in order to reproduce. Social influences may play an important role in determining the acceptance and usage of principals.

Principals' responses suggested that, for the most part, they enjoyed networking with their colleagues, and the camaraderie that it brings. Valerie felt it was a good thing just to know where people's minds are. "It's kind of good to know what they're thinking…we're kind of all

on the same page about it." Rita and Cherie both indicated they were open to suggestions and trying things that their colleagues have tried. Sharon loves to hear about successes at other schools. She thinks it is valuable to share. Sharon tells, "I would very much value what successful things are going on there, because I could replicate that in mine."

Although principals like to share and gather ideas from each other, colleagues' opinions and actions have little influence on their personal attitudes and beliefs. While Valerie was open to listening to others, she seemed pretty closed off when it came to following in the footsteps of others. As indicated in the following statements, Valerie feels that she is the best person to make decisions for her school. She said "I know what I feel, and I know what works…It doesn't change my mind. I know how I feel, and I know what's best for kids." Rita seems to have strong beliefs that are not influenced by colleagues as indicated when she said, "I don't really think I would be heavily influenced about what a peer thought because I feel very strongly that it's important." Rita admits that there is so much going on, that she just has not focused on SEL. She explained, "We just haven't done it because we have so many other things going on. There's so many other things to discuss that that's not really discussed a lot." However, Cherie realizes that there can be too many options, and many options don't fit her needs. She specified, "I do see a lot of good things, but I do see a lot of things that I wouldn't do that I don't think that's me." At the same time, Sharon is very hesitant and aware that what works for one may not necessarily work for her school. She shared her thoughts by saying, "…my best friend is a counselor at a very high socio-economic school right down the road and what she does for her kids doesn't, wouldn't necessarily work for mine. I mean we share a lot of ideas." Kevin admits that colleagues have very little effect on his actions. As it relates to SEL, Kevin doesn't believe

SEL is a relevant topic among his peers. He explained, "I don't think it's a strong enough topic in our community and in our school community."

Interaction with colleagues does however provide an avenue of inquiry and exploration towards potential opportunities. Networking and idea sharing are great ways to open the mind to new things, to find out what has worked or has not worked for others, and to identify key potential for future implementation. Rita has a friend who's a principal who has done "The Leader in Me" program and she knows it's really a great program. Cherie has successfully adopted programs that she has learned about from colleagues. She mentions a current program, "The dad's club came from SEER and I always was so jealous of the things they were doing." Kevin on the other hand made it clear he doesn't need ideas or approval from colleagues. As he described, "We proposed "Tools of the Mind" as a five school cohort, and there's two of us doing it. It didn't stop me from doing it… It aligned for us, we did it and keep doing it."

Overall, principals appear to like to share and gather ideas, but colleagues' thoughts don't change their minds. Due to her "it's my way or the highway" or "I know what's best for kids" attitude, Valerie has presented herself as a laggard. For those considered late majority adopters such as Rita, not only does she like the idea sharing, but late adopters are the ones that need to see their peers put programs into action before they will really try it. Early adopters on the other hand such as Cherie, Sharon, and Alan, like to gather ideas, but often times they think they are different and prefer to implement programs based on what works for their audience. Kevin's self-governing approach, may indicate he is very close to being in the innovator category. Innovators are key people who will pilot and champion new programs without hesitation if it fits their needs.

When considering teacher's influencing principal's actions, delegation to others and motivation seemed to be how principal's actions were affected. Principals get the message that teachers feel they have no time to teach or deal with SEL. Therefore, principals may try to delegate or pass the responsibility of SEL off to counselors, P.E. teachers, or other ancillary classrooms. It is the idea that it is someone else's problem, and it is a burden. Rita suggests that the teachers make her aware of time constraints, but she tries to strike a balance. She mentioned, "Their opinions would make me very conscious of protecting time, but still trying to have a program." Cherie values the fact that she has a good counselor that can address troubled children. She insists that teachers are often too close to the situation and are not well trained to address certain situations. She said, "I'm so glad we have a counselor…If you don't have a good counselor it's (SEL) not gonna be addressed." With the first three interviews with the late adopters, teacher's perceptions seemed to create an awareness with principals, but their response was to delegate tasks and responsibilities to others such as counselors. Whereas with the early adopter interviews, principals were motivated by the teacher's perceptions and specific actions were taken to include teachers in the decision-making process. Sharon has established a special time during her professional learning community meetings to dedicate to social and emotional related issues. Because of the teacher's limited time yet their willingness to address these important matters, she knows she has to make every minute worth their time. "…encourages me to make it a valuable use of their time and make it a solid time where we're not off track and I'm not wasting their time." Sharon is motivated to make good use of their time. While at first Alan seemed to be evasive about his approach with colleagues and how they influenced him, it became clear that Alan truly considers his teachers his colleagues. This became clear as most of his interest and focus throughout the interview was on his staff, his youth, his parents and their

80

community. Every answer always found its' way back to "His" people, what they want and what they are interested in. This speaks to the idea that Alan is motivated by the teacher's voice and values shared decision-making and teamwork. As such, Kevin is motivated by the teacher's voice and is a proponent of shared decision-making. He is very invested in empowering teachers to be a huge part of the decision making process. With that, Kevin has no reservations on re-evaluating the action plan, making changes to the action plan, fielding inspired responses, and seeking help based on teacher's voice.

When exploring the question in what ways do teachers' perceptions about SEL affect their thoughts, across the initial six interviews there is a definite divide as it relates to how teacher's perceptions affect the thoughts of the principals. With the first three interviews with the late adopters, teacher's perceptions seemed to affect their thoughts, but it was with conditions. For instance, Valerie's idea is that teacher's must prove themselves before they can be heard. She stated, "If they're trying to prove something to me that this is not working then they would have to prove something to me." Their perceptions gave Rita an awareness that she needed to protect the teacher's time above all. Cherie admitted that teacher's perceptions did not change the level of importance of SEL to her. She is highly sympathetic to the teacher's classroom challenges, but it does not shift her thoughts. Whereas, in interviews four through six, each principal valued their people's opinions and voice. Sharon really wants her people to see the value in SEL and buy-in. Alan and Kevin depend heavily on the thoughts of the teacher's and unequivocally implement shared decision-making.

<center>**Principals Perceived Job Responsibilities**</center>

Additional themes emerged that inform what is known about how principals perceive their job responsibilities.   The three themes that emerged, to varying degrees, with all principals were visibility, professional development, and teacher competence.

Visibility at School

Unquestionably principals felt it was their responsibility to model the behaviors they wished to see from their staff, students, parents and community. With that comes visibility. They take ownership of the fact that they set the tone. Valerie starts each morning in the car line greeting students and parents, opening car doors, saying good-morning to parents and kids. Valerie stated, "I think that visibility is key". As such, it is also very important for Rita to greet people in the morning. "I think the main thing is how I look and my expression on my face." It is extremely important for Cherie that children and parents see her in the mornings greeting them, in the classroom, in the cafeteria, and in extra-curricular settings. Cherie makes efforts to attend almost every function, every football game, because she knows it is important to the kids. So even if she can't stay, she makes sure they see her. Her reasoning is, "I'm a part of this community, I'm not just here." She also strongly encourages her teachers to attend events as time permits as well. Cherie admitted that visibility this year for her was a challenge because her father passed away and her child had been extremely ill for an extended period of time. It was clear that her absence this yearly truly upset her and provided a struggle for Cherie. She believes that she needs to support her teachers as stated here, "They need to see you, and they want you to see them doing their jobs." She makes sure she conducts observations and walk-thrus to provide feedback to teachers. Her reasoning is, "Giving good feedback helps the teacher to adapt things and make the necessary changes for success." Sharon knows that as principal, being present and

<center>82</center>

modeling the behaviors you'd like to see permeate at your school are key. Her credence is, "You can sink the ship by your personality...your attitude dictates what the rest of the building is gonna be like." Her commitment shows in her day to day activities such as walking the halls, opening car doors, tying shoes, grading papers on occasion just to name a few. Like others, Alan believes visibility is key. He boasts about what he calls touch point moments. He describes touch point moments as a time where every child and every teacher has at least one moment with him every day. In addition, he is constantly in classes, greeting buses, and providing feedback. Alan states the following about how his teacher's potentially perceive his actions, "If the leader is everywhere, and the leader is modeling positivity, then this is something that I can do as well." Kevin assists with morning bus duty, greeting every child. He holds a morning meeting every Monday with teachers. He mentioned, "I do a walk-through of every classroom to say good morning to teachers, and make sure they start the day in a positive way." The way in which the principals saw visibility can be summarized by Sharon's following statement "I'd want to work for somebody who wants the best for everybody, and is willing to jump in there and do it as well. Is not, unrealistic in expectations, but wants the best for everyone involved, and is serious about what they're doing." The mindset of treating others the way you would want to be treated, by modeling desired behaviors.

Lorraine and Ned spoke about visibility from a different perspective. Lorraine talked about making home visits and how it has made her more empathetic as indicated in the following statement, "Once you go from where a child is coming from and you see what's going on, you better understand why this is happening in the classroom". Lorraine was visibly troubled by some of the things she had encountered during these home visits. Ned gave an example of conversations he has had with his teachers by stating,

> I had to show them by example that sometimes you just gotta walk with the kid, ask him other questions, other than just chastising them because they were wrong, because a lot of times you'll find something happened that morning, or something happened that night at home that they're carrying and they're angry and you are the people that they take it out on because they can't take it out on them. They have permission to do things we can't.

Ned is a very personable principal. He insists that he is not a mystery and his parents, staff, students all know exactly who he is and what he represents. They also know he is completely accessible to all. This form of visibility spoken of by Lorraine and Ned focus on digging a little deeper and moving beyond the walls of the schools in some instances. It's not just about being visible, but delved into some unconventional strategies.

Professional Development

Professional development is another theme from the participants. Valerie requires a school-wide professional growth plan for each teacher. She believes the following about her teachers, "I think providing professional development for my teachers is a way for them to grow and learn." One professional development strategy mentioned by Rita, Cherie and Sharon was professional learning communities (PLC). Rita indicated the use of professional learning committee meetings each week, by grade level, for the teachers to do what needs to be done academically. Cherie has PLC meetings twice a week, while Sharon has PLC meetings once a week. PLC's seem to be an effective strategy used in training and assisting teachers. Rita also mentioned she has teachers that receive training outside of the school and then they come back and share that with the staff. Cherie uses various avenues of professional development such as, data meetings once a month with the coordinator, and response to intervention which happens every day for 45 minutes. Cherie expects her staff to treat every child special. In line with that, she thinks her teachers need more training because raising your voice or pushing for security the minute something happens sends a really bad signal sometimes to kids. Her message to teachers

is "What if you are the only hug that kid got that day? I want every kid to think they're your favorite." In line with Cherie, Kevin and his staff work with the Center for Restorative Approaches, and try to build the skill set of the teachers to have a restorative approach to both, student discipline, and student social interactions. Lorraine simply states, "Having teachers that have the proper professional development and proper knowledge and skills to increase student achievement is probably the biggest factor of success"

Teacher Competence

As it relates to SEL, Alan suggests that one of the problems is, there is a lack of training. Often times, educators have received the training and development in how to teach their content and the pedagogy behind it, but how do you teach educators to build up their kids social-emotional character?   Also, another variable is the level of competence of educators in this area. Alan admittedly watched that play out within his advisory board which consists of youth and adults. Some advisors took off day one, and other advisors struggled. Simply put, "Some people might be more intuitive or natural." Sharon realized early on that she needed to respect her staff and provide them with everything they need. To have clear, realistic expectations, but to equip them with what they need to be successful.   She said, "…just like being professionally trained in how to teach direct objects, you should be able to deal professionally with a loss in the family. Teaching SEL is another level of professionalism that would empower teachers to be even better." Kevin indicated that they focus hard on building the skill set of the teachers to have a restorative approach to both student discipline and student social interactions. He mentioned, "I think the biggest part of it (SEL) is making sure that our teachers, all the adults in the building are responding to students in a way that's kind of building up their social skills and emotional resiliency."

Other Notable Ideas With Potential for Future Investigation

Finally, a few ideas arose that are not themes, in the strictest sense of the definition, but are notable enough to be captured for potential future study.

Principal Related Ideas

These were ideas that were related to mainly management type concerns from the principal's standpoint.

Non-quantifiable nature of SEL. There was concern around the idea that SEL is non-quantifiable and hard for decision makers to grasp. While they felt SEL was critically important, it was significantly undervalued. According to Sharon, one of the many problems with this is "I don't think it's something that you can quantify and so, if you can't quantify it, then you're not gonna be able to give it a money value." Kevin echoed her sentiments by stating,

> I think the hardest thing for early childhood, or social-emotional learning, or after school programs, their biggest challenge is that they are not putting something out quantifiable enough to impact, and that's, people want to invest in things that they can see a direct impact.

Time as a Barrier. Loss of instruction time affects the ability to integrate SEL throughout the school environment. Based on their perceptions, the loss of instruction time, and the load on teachers for curriculum instruction seem to be clear concerns as seen here by Rita, Kevin and Lorraine. Rita suggested, "There's so many other things to discuss that SEL is not really discussed a lot." While Kevin insisted teachers don't have time to address social issues. He explained, "What's in front of you next is most important." Lorraine echoed their sentiments as she stated, "Teachers try to address it, but I'm gonna be very honest, with the day of accountability and so much that they have to do, they don't have the time."

Team Approach to Administration. According to Kevin, "A teacher's voice is a big part of how we make decisions." He talked about his evolution as a principal and how initially he

felt he had to do it all, but now he is at a point where he sees the need and value in including others as he so eloquently stated, "I think in my evolution as a principal, the further along I've gotten, I now really work to define very specifically what the problem is and then use other people to develop some of the solutions, or propose some of the solutions, and then I'm a primary communicator of those decisions." Kevin also indicated that he finds his greatest joy from coaching his leadership team. Rita spoke highly of her administrative team which consists of herself, the assistant principal, the curriculum coach and the counselor. She indicated that they meet a lot and talk about the direction they want to go. She admitted that most decisions are made by the team.

Data Driven Decision-Making. As expected, the use of data is extremely important, and plays a critical role in the decision-making process. Admittedly, Sharon hates the fact that the main goal of the school are performance scores, however, it is reality. It is the driving force and focus of the school district. While Lorraine admitted she's big believer in data, she believes it seems as if everything is about standardized testing now. She feels education has become just testing, testing, and more testing. She stated "I think we've gotten away from addressing social needs because we're so data driven and test driven." With that, she uses data to drive instruction. By looking at students' performance when they enter and then looking at the predictability of where they may be when they leave or where they're expected to be allows them to set forth a goal. She explained, "Making the right decisions based upon the right data and using the right methods to being able to decide what the right methods are to reach the child to achieve instructionally" is key. Rita suggested they look at data to see where there is a need to improve instruction or change something to help with the kids. As indicated in her statement, "I just try to be in a constant state of assessment and looking at places where we need to sure up our plans."

Cherie use grade level meetings where teachers work together to plan. These meetings are very data-driven and address the progress of the students in various curriculums, and what teachers need to do to continue to drive up student performance.   Ned's main concern is that the data is being properly used. This can be seen as he stated, "Are we looking at the data, are we looking at the information that is readily available to us and allowing us to make the best decisions for the students in the long term."

Student Related Ideas

These were ideas that were related directly to the well-being of the student.

Mental & Emotional Concerns.   A child's emotions well-being is very important. It truly affects their all-around success.   Rita, Sharon, and Lorraine all expressed concerns about the increased number of youth now involved in counseling.   Each of them feels that a child's emotional well-being is very important and they're not going to do well in school if they have all this other stuff going on. Rita is committed to helping, but also acknowledges that staff aren't trained for some of the mental problems. She stated, "Anything that we can do to support a child emotionally, we need to do, but you have to draw the line between, you know, we're just a school.   We're not the professionals in that area." Sharon on the other hand, really wants to love on kids. She is adamant that you don't know what that child has encountered prior to arriving at school because children are coming to school with so much responsibility. The ability to properly respond to the spectrum of social emotional intelligence is important. She adds,

> My seven year old may have gotten three other ones ready for school, and yeah, their clothes may not be perfect, or tied, or buttoned just right, but they made it in the front door of the school. We need to love on them and say 'I'm so glad you're here today' and button and tie while they're coming in the door…While that child is at school "we need to build her up…she doesn't need to feel like she's in charge of everybody.

Lorraine also attributes the lack of parental support and understanding to mental illness as well. She believes it's a vicious cycle that carries over in youth. She explained, "It's very difficult to get some of your parents on board to understand, because a lot of them, as I told you, I said the kids are battling mental illness, a lot of the parents are battling mental illness."

Differentiation of Instruction. "Everybody can learn, even if it takes you a couple or more times, you can still get it." This is a statement made by Cherie that I feel completely embodies the idea of differentiation. Cherie believes that everyone should be provided the opportunity to learn and to be successful. She explained, "Somewhere everybody needs a spot to shine so you feel good about yourself as some place in some point during your day." When discussing this she talked about the fact of finding the students' niche. She challenges her teachers to find something good or positive about every student, and to be sure to encourage them. She believes you have to look at the child, especially now, where they are and what they're bringing to the table, because everybody's homes are so different." Alan utilizes the one-to-one model which allows every youth to possess their own laptop. He happily described, "The differentiation that teachers can do for different kids at different times, and of course, the soft skills of technology has been very helpful."

Application to Life. It is important to focus more on students beyond the classroom, and the application to real life for the students. Ned and Alan both talked about application to life from a different standpoint. Alan looked at it in the sense of applying the curriculum being taught to real life, while Ned expressed the idea of making better choices. Alan describes below ways to use the curriculum in meaningful ways. He stated,

> The part that makes a curriculum really comply is to apply key points and how it connects to your life and so, when you're reading and, you know, in class, kids should be able to tell you that the reason why they read is not because they are trying to find some

plot, but because they're trying to learn more about themselves and other people...these are themes that these characters are grappling with, and we grapple with every single day.

Education is way more than addition, subtraction, spelling, and other subject matter, it is your life. Educators have to seek out the specific lessons and structures that help children find their identity and understand their place in the world.

Ned stated,

I spend a lot of time with my kids dealing with them, in terms of life; that these are the things that, I don't hide things from them. When they've got bad situations at home and they become emotional, I either relate to something I've been through, or either I sit and I'm gonna empathize/sympathize with you, but I'm gonna tell you to try and convince you there's a way for you not to ever be in this.

School Environment Related Ideas

These were ideas related to the school environment in general.

Parents/Family Interaction with the School. Cherie was concerned with having strong communication between the school staff and parents so she implemented a 24 hour turn-around with parent communication. All teachers are required to respond to emails, letters and phone calls within 24 hours. She tells her teachers "…you might not can fix it, but you at least respond and say 'I got your email, I'm going to look into that.'" Cherie said they are a good neighborhood school and have a lot of parental support with an active PTA. Cherie focused on providing meaningful roles for her parents as indicated here, "I wanted it to be something where they, what they wanted to do." The key thing to remember is parents cannot help if they don't know what's going on.

Sharon explained that the mission of her low-income neighborhood school is teaching the whole family. Teachers and staff work to make the best of everyone's time and resources. Sharon described, "When we get a parent in for a conference, we round up the other teachers of the siblings, and make sure it's a full-meal deal…let's take care of everybody's business… how

90

can we serve this family?" She then went on to give an example of serving families. There is a high, transient, Hispanic population. The school piloted a reading program using a technology program. The program could be used on computers, but could also be downloaded to iPads and taken home. The children loved the program, but the thing that stuck out to Sharon was that the iPad devices were being used at home during the school day. She found out that during the school hours the parents were on it, because it was available in Spanish…so it was helping the parents learn English".

Convivial Environment. Alan described the mission of his school was to make sure kids leave with the skills, academically and socially, to be happy, and to succeed and flourish in life. He said, "We're hoping that our kids are happy at school, and are sticking with us." Rita echoed that in saying, "We want to work hard, develop a strong ethic, but I want us to be joyful while we're doing that." Ned brings home the idea of a happy place as he described his aspirations for his school as follows, "… to become good stewards of the classroom, good stewards with each other, but ultimately good stewards of society…I wanted to create a culture of everybody doing the same; when we are doing the same, it becomes a really great school."

Safety for Children. Throughout the interviews, there was a consistent, underlying message of providing a safe haven for children. A place where children don't have to worry about the outside distractions while they are at the school. My observations as I went in and out of these schools was that this was truly the sentiment of all the principals. Each school had restrictions in place to protect their children. Some schools may have been more lenient than others, but there were still noticeable efforts in place. Specific safety measures I noticed as I visited the schools were: doors to the main office were locked and you had to be buzzed in; everyone had to sign in and photos were taken; driver's licenses were collected during the visit

and then returned after; hallways to the classrooms were locked, and everyone (teachers, students, visitors) had to be buzzed back; and there was visible security located on most of the campuses. It's undeniable that we are definitely living in a different time. Twenty years ago, many of these precautions were not needed and were not even thought of. Now in today's society, it is the new normal. I have to admit, I was a little shocked by some of the things I saw, but I realize it is imperative that youth have a safe place to learn, and it is the school's responsibility to make sure that happens.

Summary

Passion is not something that is just found, it is something that is constructed. Passion is that thing within a person that thrusts them to action. Passion transforms vision into reality. There was a lack of passion regarding SEL with the late majority adopter principals. They possessed neutral attitudes and no strong feelings or beliefs. While they may have acknowledge the importance of SEL, there were no actions taken to integrate into their school. In contrast, early adopters were positive and showed actions of actively seeking ways to integrate SEL components. One main difference between the passionate and non-passionate principals was the passionate principals had an attitude of intentionality and empowerment. Principals who do not possess passion become stuck and are limited due to this lack of passion.

The lack of understanding of an SEL definition was a major barrier in this study. However, some important themes did emerge. Late adopter principals possessed a neutral attitude, so even though they felt SEL was important, there was no action taken to integrate. Whereas, early adopters had positive attitudes about SEL, felt it was important, and were taking some sort of action towards integrating.

The social environment can influence one's intentions and actions.   Leadership characteristics of a principal span across each of the ecological systems of the school environment.   However, that influence may or may not be reciprocated. Results indicated that social systems related to colleagues did not have much influence on the principals. However, individuals with a perceived control over principals such as superintendents, school board members, and BESE displayed some influence over principals. While, a few principals indicated teachers have influence by motivating their decision-making, and inspiring delegation of responsibilities.

Three themes that emerged, visibility, professional development and teacher competence were of importance to all of the principals included in this study. Each principal discussed and highlighted these three things. These themes are seen as important parts of their principal responsibility. Principals saw it as extremely important to be visible and model the behaviors they wish to see from their staff and students. Also they felt continuous, exceptional professional development opportunities was needed for both teachers and for them personally. Adequate professional development is very key in increasing teacher competence. Having teachers that are competent in all areas leads to successful school environments. Finally, a few other ideas surfaced that should be noted, and may have relevance for future studies. Principal related ideas were: non-quantifiable, time, team approach and data driven. Student related ideas were: mental and emotional issues, differentiation, and application to life. School environment related ideas were: parents and family, convivial environment, and safety for children.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to use grounded theory methodology to examine school principals' beliefs and attitudes about SEL. It was the goal that from a theoretical standpoint, a theory of attitudes and beliefs around SEL would be developed. While a theory was not derived, it is the belief that this study may contribute to a model of principals' understanding about SEL.

The research questions were:

1) What past experiences influence the way principals view SEL?

2) What positive and negative judgments do principals make about SEL?

3) What social supports would cause principals to integrate and champion SEL?

Summary of Procedures

This study consisted of eight interviews from K-8th grade principals of public schools in urbanized areas located in Louisiana. Purposeful sampling of three participants was initially executed. With permission of the LSU AgCenter Institutional Review Board, potential participants were contacted and asked prescreening questions. Upon confirming the participant met the study parameters, Participants were invited to take part in a face-to-face interview. If participants agreed, an interview was scheduled at which time an informed consent was emailed to them. Interviews were conducted. Media files of the interviews were sent to a hired transcription company. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed. From there, theoretical sampling was employed. Interviews were conducted until saturation was reached. Data was analyzed using handwritten, color coded methods such as highlighting transcriptions, the use of sticky notes, and color coded grouping and printing. The data was analyzed using initial and

focused coding methods. Theoretical sampling and constant comparison were employed interchangeably throughout the data collection and data analysis phases of the study. In addition to coding, field notes and memo writing were extremely important components of data analysis process.

Summary of Findings

The themes identified in this study were: lack of passion, lack of understanding, social influences, and principal presence and staff proficiency. The theme of lack of passion emerged as late majority adopters presented neutral attitudes and no strong beliefs regarding SEL. Lack of understanding became evident as principals clearly did not possess a clear definition of SEL. Social influences or lack thereof were discovered as there was minimum influence on principals. Professional development and teacher competence as it relates to SEL are scarce, yet justly needed.

Lack of Passion for SEL

Passion is defined as "a strong inclination toward an activity that people like, that they find important, and in which they invest time and energy" (Vallerand & Houlfant, 2003, p. 175). Late majority adopter principals exhibited an overall lack of passion. This was underpinned by neutral attitudes and no strong feelings or beliefs regarding SEL, but also, no strong feelings in general. So while late majority adopter principals may have felt SEL was important, there were no clear actions or urgency to integrate the SEL components into the day to day functioning of the school. On the other hand, early adopters were positive and showed signs of effort and actions. This was consistent even with the final two interviews. Even though the interview questions and the process changed, the way in which Lorraine (non-passionate) and Ned

(passionate) answered still aligned with the differences identified earlier between passionate versus non-passionate principals.

It is difficult for non-passionate principals to see how they can "add on" SEL. In contrast, passionate principals may see it as an additional responsibility, but because they know the importance, they visualize and reflect on how it can be integrated. In this study, the difference between the passionate versus non-passionate principals was that the passionate principals possessed an attitude of intentionality and empowerment. Results indicated that passionate principals actively planned, sought out, and engaged in new programming opportunities. This group embodied more of a "let's make a plan and get it done type approach" whereas, the non-passionate principals embodied a "yeah that's important, but…" type of attitude. Passion inspires others to join and identify with a vision. It is not likely that teachers would be inspired by a leader who is not passionate. Passion and the lack of passion is contagious. If passionate, inspired teachers are desired, it begins with the leader.

Passionate principals were consistent in empowering teachers to be a huge part of the decision making process. Previous research by Federici (2013) indicates that high expectation principals focus more on possibilities, while low expectation principals focus on obstacles. In addition, the research surrounding transformational leadership suggests that innovation and empowerment of the teachers in shared decision-making are key (Marks & Printy, 2003). Principals who can establish a trusting school environment with all involved will affect change (Byrk et al., 2010). Empowering teachers indicates a level of trust. Principals must trust themselves that they have made the right decision and hired the right people. Also, it shows a trust of teachers to effectively do the job they were hired to do. When principals have more autonomy, stronger relationships are formed (Price, 2012). By empowering teachers to be a part

of the decision-making, principals are building teacher competence in problem solving. In addition they are giving them the go ahead to take risks and to try new things (Short & Greer, 2002).

Conventionally, urban principals are met with intensified stresses from outside entities that may limit their autonomy (Hannaway & Talbert, 1993). Self-determination theory suggests that the social environment influences how individuals perceive themselves as being autonomous or being controlled by others (Black & Deci, 2000).   It appeared that non-passionate principals did not have much autonomy. Each of them spoke about the school district or some other entity really dictating what was being done at the school. While each of the principals experienced being delegated to and parameters in which to operate, those non-passionate principals seemed to see it as a barrier and use it as an excuse.   Whereas the passionate principals acknowledged the outer influence, but still owned that within their walls they were free to paint their own canvas of how they arrived at the end results. When principals are given the control of making decisions about how the vision and goals of their school will be determined, it creates an atmosphere for the school to be effective (Goldring & Pasternack, 1994). Admittedly, two of the four passionate principals were at public chartered schools. That environment does provide more flexibility. However, even though they are not constrained by a school board, they do have an advisory by which they operate. Autonomy, or lack thereof, is a factor to some degree in explaining why principals think they can or cannot integrate SEL. It is impractical to hold principals accountable for student achievement, but not allow autonomy. As such, granting autonomy but not having any accountability is just as impractical.

Implications for Practice and Research

Implications for practice consist of a need to include teachers in the decision-making process. In addition, when superintendents know whether principals are early adopters or late majority adopters, it can drive the structuring of training for principals to acquire skills in influencing and integrating programs into the overall school climate. Also, this can inform the superintendent's decisions for selecting pilot schools for programming. New programs can be distributed to early adopter principals to implement, while slowly feeding the late majority adopters small pieces. By the time the late majority adopters are convinced to consider implementation, there will be evidence of success to report, which will provide minimized risk and needed comfort for them to try. Implications for future research are to explore the perceived autonomy of passionate (early adopter) versus non-passionate (late majority adopters) principals.

Recommendations for Practice and Research

Adult change is as much important as student performance. However, it has not been given the same attention. Leaders and teachers must show emotional intelligence. Principals must embrace the inclusion of teachers in all aspects of the decision-making process as it relates to the school environment. Non-passionate principals should intentionally develop strategies to empower their teachers. Since most principals will not likely identify themselves as non-passionate, this is a recommendation for all principals. Through the use of current professional learning communities, teachers should be encouraged to lead the charge of creating a plan for SEL integration.

<div align="center">

Lack of a Clear Understanding of a SEL Definition

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Throughout this study, it was clear that the principals did not possess a clear definition of SEL. There was an irrefutable lack of understanding. This held true whether it was a passionate

principal or a non-passionate principal. Principals grasped for ways to define SEL, and most

tried to focus on the two words social and emotional to conjure up a definition. It was evident

that SEL has not been an area exclusively explored or thought of by principals. This lack of

understanding is consistent with existing research. Since SEL is seen as an all-encompassing

term, it diminishes the quality of impacts in research (Zeidner et al, 2002; Hoffman, 2009). The

lack of framing or wobbly framing of SEL affects conceptual rigor (Humphrey, 2013).   The

wide array of definitions and broad focus areas create serious concerns (Merrell and Gueldner,

2012). Some school-based intervention programs which proclaim best practices in the name of

SEL actually have very little relevance to the concept of social and/or emotional content (Zeidner

et al, 2002; Humphrey, 2013). This lack of clarity makes it almost impossible to build consensus

on a common understanding of SEL (Humphrey, 2013).

Implications for Practice and Research

SEL skills are often naturally embedded in the very core of schools, and with meaningful

planning and implementation, these skills could be established as the foundation of the school.

There must be an intentional effort made to provide a clear understanding of the benefits of SEL.

Principals must understand that SEL represents a set of skills and dispositions that can be built

developmentally if done so with intentionality, effort, and continuity. They must also understand

that these skills have been known to ultimately mediate academic, civic, and workplace success.

Principals need to consider that every skill building component of SEL is important for the

growth and success of people. The lack of staff familiarity with, the understanding of, and

training in the deep principles of programs and what it takes to build skills currently presents

barriers.

Recommendations for Practice and Research

This study revealed that schools are implementing SEL on some level. Consideration of

a phases of implementation continuum is recommended. Three approaches to SEL integration

are the presence of the following: 1) explicit SEL skills instructions, 2) integration with

academic curriculum areas, and 3) teacher instruction practices. A sound evaluation tool

measuring the implementation level of each of the previous approaches is recommended.

Comprehensive training, especially at the administrative level and policy level are needed. In

addition to training, implementation support will be key to success. It is recommended that

principals pursue and create their own trainings for teachers on how to embed SEL skills into the

curriculum. This would include a step by step practical guide or strategy for looking into state

level expectations and requirements and figuring out what that means for their particular

classroom. Given the new law Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which is set to replace the

No Child Left Behind Act, it is the prime opportunity for schools to take advantage of

establishing independence in strategically creating training for proper integration and

implementation of all stakeholders.

Insight garnered from this study gives opportunities for external program designers (e.g.

consultants, contract trainers, cooperative extension youth development educators) to assist. Key

strategies for supporting principals' efforts to champion SEL adoption can be established and

presented in a way to entice principals. Since principals do see SEL integration as important, yet

do not have the luxury of piloting every program that's presented to them, it would stand to

reason that anything that aids in their process of making a sound decision would be helpful.

Take for instance, if an extension 4-H program developer was able to provide a clearly defined,

robust SEL program, and was able to package it in a manner that addressed the key barriers to

implementation that principals have identified then principals may be willing to explore and be a champion for this program.

Social Influence on Principals

The school environment is viewed as several nested layers of systems operating together (Brofenbrenner, 1989). Leadership is multi-layered with cognitive and behavioral duties that take place in a social environment (McCormick, 2001). In leadership, social cognitive theory involves using social influences to organize, direct and motivate the actions of others. Presence and visibility was clearly important to the principals, and was perceived to improve their influence on others. "People are neither driven by inner forces nor automatically shaped and controlled by the environment. Instead, they function as contributors to their own motivation, behavior, and development within a network of reciprocally interacting influences" (Bandura, 2011, p. 8). Therefore, the social environment can influence one's intentions and actions. Behavioral beliefs provide a favorable or unfavorable attitude towards a behavior. While subjective norms, are the perceived social pressures from individuals considered to be important, centered on performing or not performing a behavior.

French and Rave's (1959) five types of power may have some bearings in how principals in this study are influenced. Results indicated that social systems related to colleagues did not have much influence on the principals. Principals did indicate benefits from colleagues sharing ideas. However, while principals liked to share and gather ideas from each other, their colleagues' opinions and actions had little influence on their personal attitudes, beliefs, or actions. Bearing in mind principal's being influenced by colleagues, referent power may be considered since it complies with perceived social pressure that may arise as principals identify with other principals, and aspire to be more like them (French & Rave, 1959). This may be

evident if principals' perceive other principal's as innovators or trend setters in the field. On the other hand, if principals do not identify with their colleagues, they consider them to have no perceived power.

Those individuals or groups that possessed a perceived control over principals such as superintendents, school boards, and BESE showed some influence over the principals' action; hence, influencing their behaviors. When considering principals being influenced by their superintendents and other perceived power players, reward, coercive and legitimate power potentially all apply. Reward power applies since superintendents are thought to have the power to reward the desired behavior. Coercive power applies since superintendents may be able to hand out punishment for non- compliance. Legitimate power applies since the superintendent has the right to prescribe the behavior due to their role (French & Rave, 1959).

There were also some examples of teacher influence as some principals indicated that teachers motivated their decision-making, and inspired delegation of responsibilities. It may appear teachers have no power over their superior, however, they may possess expert power given their subject matter expertise (French & Rave, 1959). This says that those principals who felt motivated and inspired by their teachers, value and respect the teachers and feel they are competent.

Overall, principals have influence on everyone involved in the system, but do not seem to be easily influenced by others. Their approach is "what's best for one may not be best for all". It is ultimately up to the principal to decide what works for their population. If it happens to be something that another colleague has tried and had success with, they are open to it. However, progression is often a matter of stepping out, being innovative, and piloting a specialized program to fit the needs of the population served.

Implications for Practice and Research

There should be education at the state level. BESE and the Department of Education should be educated on the benefits of SEL. The policy makers influence how SEL is implemented. There is an opportunity with ESSA for BESE and the Department of Education to really put some intentional efforts into requiring SEL integration into all standards for both student achievement and teacher accountability.

Recommendations for Practice and Research

Superintendents can take the policy recommendations and identify the strengths and gaps in current district-wide programming. Superintendents should establish district requirements for SEL integration. From there principals should be given the autonomy to plan and implement those requirements based on their specific staff and school environment. School and district level teams can use the CASEL SELect guide which incorporates district and school theories of action. It is recommended that a system of ongoing embedded training for administrators, teachers and other stakeholders be employed. School districts and schools should use SEL data to guide school improvement plans and inform SEL resource needs (CASEL, 2013).

Professional Development and Teacher Competence

Staff proficiency encompasses professional development and personal competence of SEL for teachers. Often times, educators have received the training and development in how to teach their content and the pedagogy behind it, but they are not trained in strategies to develop and strengthen social and emotional learning in their students. This makes the approach to professional development and teacher competence extremely important. Schools have bureaucracy filled with wide-ranging policies and priorities that must be considered (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, Elbertson & Salovey, 2012). While everyone associated with the school must

be indoctrinated on SEL implementation, teachers are the primary deliverers of SEL programs. Therefore, extensive training and professional development for teachers is key. Training is the main way programs are introduced to schools. During training, teachers can acquire background knowledge, theory and philosophy of SEL programming.

In addition to training, teachers must possess personal SEL competence. Critical to SEL programming is the idea that teachers will deliver programming with fidelity and will possess a positive attitude (Reyes, et al., 2012). Teachers are required to deliver the program in an effective manner consistent with the program's philosophy and goals. Teachers must model the social and emotional skills targeted or they will be less likely to effectively communicate the skills to students (Reyes, et al., 2012). High quality education is unlikely if teachers do not have a positive attitude about SEL. Given the lack of clear preservice or in-service training focused on the development of the personal aspect of teachers, there seems to be an assumption that teachers are expected to be innately competent socially and emotionally. Teachers are overloaded with a multitude of responsibilities. They are expected to freely give of themselves emotionally no matter how they are feeling or what may be transpiring in their personal life. They must defuse conflicts among students and encourage students all while trying to effectively teach (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Given the extremely hard demands placed on teachers it is hard to fathom that more emphasis is not situated on training around social and emotional issues (Hargreaves, 1998).

Implications for Practice and Research

It would behoove policy makers to evaluate the current state level requirements for teacher certification. Implications for practice is the inclusion of SEL skill development into the state level teacher certification. Required courses designed to teach aspiring teachers strategies

to effectively integrate SEL into curricula; assessing their own social and emotional competence; and exploring their knowledge and personal beliefs about SEL. This would create more competent teachers that would know how to align curricular units with their respective subject matter, since the attitude of a teacher is integral to implementation quality. Implications for future research may include assessing teacher and principal understanding and attitudes as it relates to SEL.

Recommendations for Practice and Research

Potentially, a complete, all at once, school integration of SEL may not be realistic. It is recommended that principals use a scaffolding approach similar to the approach suggested for early and late majority adopters. Identifying teachers who are champions of SEL to pilot and implement new programs. Dedicating funds and focused training on a select few. As teachers present success and show growth, highly resistant teachers may be more apt to buy-in.

It is also recommended that extension personnel or other outside agencies create opportunities to serve in the role of consultant for schools. These agencies could research existing approved SEL programs and provide schools with a specialized implementation plan, trainings, coaching, and monitoring. CASEL has developed a guide with CASEL SELect recommended programs that could be used to identify potential programs. The selection of the most suitable program would be a joint effort with the school and the consultant.

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106

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APPENDIX A

Appendix A

Informed Consent

The purpose of this study is for a theory to emerge that describes school principals' beliefs and attitudes about social and emotional learning (SEL).

You will be asked to answer a series of 5 questions. This interview will take approximately 45 minutes. There are no known risks associated with this study. We expect this research to assist in exploring how your actions (both intentional and non-intentional) may affect the school. In addition, knowing influential factors may help predict successful implementation strategies that are specific to your school.

Please understand that participation is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect your current or future relationship with LSU, LSU AgCenter or its faculty or staff. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason, without penalty. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this study.

If you have questions or would like additional information about this research, please contact Kimberly Jones at 225-578-2196 or kyjones@agcenter.lsu.edu or Dr. Melissa Cater at 225-578-2903 or mcater@lsu.edu. This study has been approved by the LSU AgCenter IRB. If you have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, you can contact Phil Elzer, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-4182, Pelzer@agcenter.lsu.edu.

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Printed Name of Participant _____

APPENDIX B

Initial Interview Protocol

1. How would you describe the central mission of your school?

    a. What are the major goals? What is your highest priority?

    b. What are the most important methods for achieving the mission?

2. Tell me about a recent innovation (new, outside of the norm) at your school.

    a. Who was the driving force behind that innovation?

    b. If you, tell me about what you did.

    c. If someone else, what was your role?

    d. How is it turning out? (may need to probe for those who aren't as involved)

3. As principal, how do you influence change in the school environment?

    a. In your day to day actions, what things do you do that have a direct effect on the school environment?

    b. What things are you doing that influence others to react and make changes that affect the school environment?

4. What does social and emotional learning (SEL) mean to you? What are your initial thoughts about integrating it into your school?

    a. Please describe your past experiences with SEL.

    b. When you think about SEL programming in your school, what feelings come to mind?

    c. In what ways, if any, does colleagues perceptions about SEL affect your thoughts?

    d. In what ways, if any, does colleagues perceptions about SEL affect your actions?

e. In what ways, if any, do teachers' perceptions about SEL affect your thoughts?

f. In what ways, if any, do teachers' perceptions about SEL affect your actions?

5. Would you like to provide any other insights regarding SEL integration in your school?

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol-Revision 1

1. How would you describe the central mission of your school?

    a. What are the major goals? What is your highest priority?

    b. What are the most important methods for achieving the mission?

2. Tell me about something recently implemented (new, outside of the norm) at your school.

    a. Who was the driving force behind that innovation?

    b. If you, tell me about what you did.

    c. If someone else, what was your role?

    d. How is it turning out? (may need to probe for those who aren't as involved)

3. As principal, how do you influence change in the school environment?

    a. In your day to day actions, what things do you do that have a direct effect on the school environment?

    b. What things are you doing that influence others to react and make changes that affect the school environment?

4. What does social and emotional learning (SEL) mean to you?

    According to CASEL, "Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."

    Are you familiar with this? What, if any, programs at your school focus of include SEL?

    What are your initial thoughts about intentionally integrating it into your school?

    a. Please describe your past experiences with SEL.

b. When you think about SEL programming in your school, what feelings come to mind? (MAY NEED TO ASK: What do you believe are the benefits of such programs? What do you believe are the consequences (negatives) of such programs?

c. In what ways, if any, does colleagues perceptions about SEL affect your thoughts?

d. In what ways, if any, does colleagues perceptions about SEL affect your actions?

e. In what ways, if any, do teachers' perceptions about SEL affect your thoughts?

f. In what ways, if any, do teachers' perceptions about SEL affect your actions?

5. Would you like to provide any other insights regarding SEL integration in your school?

According to CASEL, "Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."

APPENDIX D

Initial Interview Protocol- Revision 2

1. How many years have you been the principal at your current/last school?

2. Have/Did you implement any new programs in the past 3 years?

3. Which of the following statements best describes you? a) I am always the first to introduce new curriculum/programs; b) I tend to wait before introducing new curriculum/programs until my colleagues have tried it; c) I prefer to wait until all the kinks have been worked out before I introduce new curriculum/programs.

4. How would you describe the central mission of your school?

    a. What are the major goals? What is your highest priority?

    b. What are the most important methods for achieving the mission?

5. Tell me about something recently implemented (new, outside of the norm) at your school.

    a. Who was the driving force behind that innovation?

    b. If you, tell me about what you did.

    c. If someone else, what was your role?

    d. How is it turning out? (may need to probe for those who aren't as involved)

6. As principal, how do you influence change in the school environment?

    a. In your day to day actions, what things do you do that have a direct effect on the school environment?

    b. What things are you doing that influence others to react and make changes that affect the school environment?

7. What does social and emotional learning (SEL) mean to you?

    According to CASEL, "Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes

and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."

Are you familiar with this? What, if any, programs at your school focus of include SEL?

What are your initial thoughts about intentionally integrating it into your school?

    a. Please describe your past experiences with SEL.

    b. When you think about SEL programming in your school, what feelings come to mind? (**MAY NEED TO ASK**: What do you believe are the benefits of such programs? What do you believe are the consequences (negatives) of such programs?

    c. In what ways, if any, does colleagues perceptions about SEL affect your thoughts?

    d. In what ways, if any, does colleagues perceptions about SEL affect your actions?

    e. In what ways, if any, do teachers' perceptions about SEL affect your thoughts?

    f. In what ways, if any, do teachers' perceptions about SEL affect your actions?

8. Would you like to provide any other insights regarding SEL integration in your school?

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol- Revision 3

6. How many years have you been the principal at your current/last school?

7. Have/Did you implement any new programs in the past 3 years?

8. Which of the following statements best describes you? a) I am always the first to introduce new curriculum/programs; b) I tend to wait before introducing new curriculum/programs until my colleagues have tried it; c) I prefer to wait until all the kinks have been worked out before I introduce new curriculum/programs.

Show index card with words on it….

     A. Goal Setting

     B. Decision Making

     C. Relationship Building

     D. Emotional Regulation

     E. Empathy

9. When you see this phrase or word, what are your initial thoughts as it relates to building student skills?

10. What is the school's role in building this skill in students?

11. What words describe how you feel about your school's responsibility for integrating (goal setting)?

12. What past experiences do you (personally) have with building student's (goal setting) skills?

13. When you see this phrase or word, what are your initial thoughts as it relates to building student skills?

14. What is the school's role in building this skill in students?

15. What words describe how you feel about your school's responsibility for integrating (Decision making)?

16. What past experiences do you (personally) have with building student's (Decision making) skills?

17. When you see this phrase or word, what are your initial thoughts as it relates to building student skills?

18. What is the school's role in building this skill in students?

19. What words describe how you feel about your school's responsibility for integrating (relationship building)?

20. What past experiences do you (personally) have with building student's (relationship building) skills?

21. When you see this phrase or word, what are your initial thoughts as it relates to building student skills?

22. What is the school's role in building this skill in students?

23. What words describe how you feel about your school's responsibility for integrating (emotional regulation)?

24. What past experiences do you (personally) have with building student's (emotional regulation) skills?

25. When you see this phrase or word, what are your initial thoughts as it relates to building student skills?

26. What is the school's role in building this skill in students?

27. What words describe how you feel about your school's responsibility for integrating (empathy)?

28. What past experiences do you (personally) have with building student's (empathy) skills?

29. Are you familiar with the phrase Social and emotional learning?

30. If yes, what does that mean to you?

31. Would you like to provide any other insights regarding integration of the skills we've discussed in your school?

Definition…According to CASEL, "Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."

APPENDIX F

Sample Interview Chart

Interview Chart Rubric
Date _____   Time_____ Principal Name _____
School_____ City_____
Grade Level _____How many years as Principal of this school? _____
How many overall years of experience in education? _____

Overall Description of Location	Feelings	Visual	

Questions	Participant Demeanor & Special notes	Personal reflections	Ah ha moments

VITA

Kimberly is a native of McComb, MS, where she was born to the parents of Willie and Kathryn Jones. She attended South Pike High School where she graduated in May 1995. Upon graduation, she entered Alcorn State University in August 1995. She graduated from Alcorn State University in May of 1999 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agribusiness Management. In 1999, she began work on her Master of Science degree in Agricultural Economics at Alcorn State University. She briefly worked as a production supervisor for Tyson Foods, Inc. in April 2001 before she found her calling as a youth development professional.

Kimberly joined the LSU Agricultural Center in January 2002, when she was appointed as an Extension Associate for the 4-H CYFAR grant in Houma, LA, Terrebonne Parish. Kimberly completed her M.S. degree from Alcorn State University, and was subsequently hired as an Assistant Extension Agent with the 4-H Youth Development Program in Plaquemine, LA, Iberville Parish in October 2003. In April 2008, she accepted a position as a State 4-H Program Development Specialist on the Baton Rouge campus of Louisiana State University. This is the position she currently holds. Kimberly began her doctoral program during the Fall of 2011, in the School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development at Louisiana State University. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy is expected to be conferred at the fall commencement ceremony in December 2016.