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High School Teachers' Self-Reported Knowledge and Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning Competencies

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MSW, Loma Linda University, 2006

BA, California State University San Bernardino, 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Public policymakers have failed to address public high school students' social and emotional learning (SEL). Recent public policies such as Common Core State Standards (CCSS) do not measure SEL outcomes as significant. Public education is government funded and therefore public policy driven. Research indicates SEL competencies have a positive influence on students' academic successes, classroom behaviors, and future career outcomes. The conceptual framework for this study was based on SEL components described by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and served as the lens though which the data were analyzed. Research questions for this phenomenological study explored teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of the 5 SEL tenets: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills. Participants were a purposive sample of 10 teachers of all subjects and levels at Title 1 schools in the southwestern United States. Semistructured open-ended interviews were used to collect the data. Key results indicated teachers needed clarification on SEL competencies and wanted SEL training. Participants discussed structured SEL activities necessary for well-rounded citizens. SEL may contribute to positive social change if policymakers, education administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders seeking policy reforms focus on SEL inclusion into public policies such as CCSS.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Lynn Y. Thompson. This is for you, Mom. You live forever in my heart. While you walked this earth, you were my all-around fan and I thank you for that. Jonathan Rhoe, my husband, who patiently cheered me on and stood by me. Thank you for being on this adventure with me. To my eldest daughter, much of our academic career we accomplished together; Dr. Nashira Y. Funn, I am honored to be your mom, you have the will and determination to accomplish your dreams. To Larissa I. West, my cheerful one, you are the most pleasant daughter a mother could desire. I am proud of the steadfast and independent young woman, wife, and mother you are, magnificent job! My Tatiana S. Clark, you are an impressive and resourceful young woman who never fails to surprise me, and a daughter who incessantly brings me joy and laughter. You recreate yourself daily; keep it up. Finally, yet prominently, Moriah L. Clark, world traveler, adventurer, and *ma fille l'esprit libre* (*free spirited daughter*). Thank you for being an additional pair of eyes and dutiful reader of my dissertation drafts, and most of all for being my constant companion. Never stop dreaming and never settle for less than magnificent. Likewise, of course my loving grandchildren who have given their *Nani* lots of *time-grace:* Natalia F. Funn, Darnell L. Brown Jr., Samuel E. Funn Jr., and Demi L. West, each of you are incredibly fun. You are my universe!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

The relationship between public policy, social emotional learning (SEL), public education practices, and economic barriers collectively intersect and served as the focus of this study. It is important to understand the U.S. Federal government's involvement in public policy as it relates to education practices. In public policy and administration, distinctive factors motivate policymakers in creating legislative laws and policies to manage society.

Public policy administration is multifaceted and compulsory, playing a historical role in North American culture. The United States Federal and State governments have fundamental goals to accomplish for its citizens, such as formulating governing systems or rules for its institutions like public schools (Weible, 2014). Public policy and politics are intertwined; policies provide statutes that govern the nation and directly influence a society's values, cultures, and its citizens' goals. Public policy can shape what society looks like overall, as it provides a legal framework for citizen conduct via "laws, regulations, executive decisions and government programs" (Weible, 2014, p. 4). As a result, policies can provide social constructs that specifically affect one social group more positively or negatively than another, sometimes purposely and sometimes unintentionally. This can result in policymakers conforming to established stereotypes and treatments when dealing with marginalized populations (Schneider, Ingram, & Deleon, 2014).

A long-standing area of public policy that significantly influences the nation is the area of public education. Federal government representatives have historically called attention to the importance of public schooling. These include advocating representatives such as Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Horace Mann, who is credited with planting the early foundations of public schools, and W.E.B. Du Bois, who fought for equal access to public education, believing that education was fundamental to African Americans to overcome the barriers of socioeconomic status (SES) in the United States (Franklin, 1990; Kober, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2006). The resulting efforts of these historic political figures and many others in positions like them, exemplify the importance of public policy within the field of education.

A recent example of education policy is Assembly Bill 2246 Pupil Suicide Prevention Policies, signed by California Governor Jerry Brown in September 2016 (Assembly Bill [AB]-2246, 2015-2016). This policy, which became the first like it in the nation, mandates all middle and high schools to provide suicide prevention plans and includes directives to take into consideration the unique risks of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer (LGBTQ) youth in relation to suicide concerns (AB- 2246, 2015-2016). This public policy directly affects the treatment of a specific group and demonstrates how public policy can affect public education. In addition to meeting the wellbeing needs of students, lawmakers also formulate U.S. education policies to consider the needs of the economy.

Policymakers in education use data (student test scores) gathered from school administered testing as tools for lawmaking. Outcomes-based frameworks make helpful

use of student test score data to communicate meanings, which policymakers then use to formulate curricula directed towards task specifications that will benefit national workforce needs (Allais, 2012, p. 257). Data from student standardized testing results are used in outcomes-based frameworks that are constructed with values of neoliberalism (NL) and economic imperialism (EI), and these outcomes are used to help determine policies and reforms that will impel a profitable and robust economy (Humphrey, 2013). Neoliberalism is defined as a modified form of liberalism that favors free-market capitalism (Allais, 2012; Ball, 2007; Humphrey, 2013; Lundahl, 2012). EI is defined as the establishment of control of resources outside of neoclassical economics (Allais, 2012). Neoliberalism and EI are relevant to this study because U.S. education policies are motivated by the needs of the economy. This motivation may be a barrier for the inclusion of SEL in public policies like CCSS.

Cochran, Meyer, Carr, and Cayer (2009) described how outcomes-based frameworks that use standardized testing influence lawmakers in public policy development. The influence of NL viewpoints and subsequent outcomes-based frameworks have come to overemphasize students' success in areas of measurable skills as holding economic value, such areas as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), while disregarding social emotional values and aspects found in SEL. The implementation of EI concepts with public policy results in a lack of emphasis on SEL skills.

CASEL and other researchers have not only identified SEL aspects as being fundamental to students' social and emotional development but have also found these

aspects to increase academic and economic success (Civic Enterprises, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). In other words, even if current policy reflects ideas of NL and focuses on teaching students skills that have been deemed beneficial to the economy, such as STEM, there are still benefits to teaching SEL aspects. Accordingly, non-academic skills must be addressed to prepare students for learning and eventual career successes (Garcia, 2016). Social and emotional learning will increase the goal of NL and thus dispel the concept of EI. Neoliberalism therefore benefits from addressing SEL factors.

Overall, current educational policies focus on equipping students in grades K–12 with economically valuable skills to the exclusion of other assumed less valuable skills. The effects of such policies of EI have significantly influenced U.S. public policy (Ball, 2007; Lundahl, 2012). Current educational policies focus on students acquiring knowledge and skills that have been deemed beneficial to the U.S. economy, such as reading, science, and mathematics. Such skills development influences funding and program development, which in turn determines the curricula and benchmarks of U.S. public schools (Allais, 2012; Croft, Roberts, & Stenhouse, 2016). EI's influence on public policy has resulted in the emphasis in education on the promotion of a students' abilities to compete economically and accumulate wealth, based on a narrow perspective of what types of skills are economically valuable (Lundahl, 2012). Target populations and groups in society, as described earlier, influence government officials and public policymaking by their societal outcome expectations. Therefore, children are dependent on the education provided to them in order to become independent contenders in society

(Schneider et al., 2014). Developing students' marketable skills has taken the forefront to the detriment of other necessary social skills, such as positive decision-making, conflict management, relationship building, and self-awareness.

One such policy that pertains to mathematics and sciences is the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (America COMPETES) Acts of 2007 and 2010. These acts were implemented to influence the desired outcome to stimulate and engage U.S. citizens to be competitive in a robust economic society (Gonzalez & Kuenzi, 2012). Gonzalez and Kuenzi (2012) reported that excesses of $2 billion USD of federal funding was provided for STEM programs, which the government considers economically valuable.

Although social and emotional skills are largely ignored in U.S. public policy and public school curricula, such competencies have a significant positive influence on students' academic achievement (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; (Durlak, Weissberg, Schellinger, Dymnicki, & Taylor, 2011; Humphrey, 2013). Because public policy influences public school curricula as well as teacher training programs and professional development (Wiseman, 2012), teachers are likely taught the importance of fostering students' social and emotional competencies. However, without direct policy mandates and funding for specific SEL curriculum implementation, little attention is given to the development of SEL skills in students. Thus, the aim of this phenomenological study was to explore teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation, if any, of the theoretical concepts and the resulting spectrum of competencies for social emotional learning established by the Collaborative for

Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The five social and emotional competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills (CASEL, 2015). Specifically, I explored what high school teachers at southern California schools understood about these competencies and whether they integrated them into classroom curricula. A social implication of this study is that the results may contribute to public policy reforms in education curricula and teacher development.

This introductory chapter begins with a background of the problem. The chapter includes the problem statement, purpose statement, research question, and subquestions, followed by a description of the conceptual framework of the study. This chapter also includes a discussion of the study's nature, definitions of key concepts, assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's significance and a brief summary.

Background

The scope of this study's topic, SEL, refers to an individual's ability to acquire the skills needed to manage personal emotions, set and achieve goals, demonstrate concern for others, maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. The conceptual framework of this study is based on the CASEL, which is the United States' leading organization advancing the development of SEL and has developed competencies based on their extensive research. The CASEL identified five tenets of social and emotional learning competencies. These tenets are students' self-awareness, self-

management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making abilities (Payton et al., 2008).

Despite the proven benefits of social and emotional skills, like improving academic success and reducing problem behaviors (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Durlak, et al., 2011), SEL is rarely an educational priority beyond the elementary years (Humphrey, 2013). The dearth of SEL in high school curricula is because of the shift in focus to cognitive development, academic achievement, and high-stakes testing (standardized testing) that occurs in secondary grades (Humphrey, 2013). This emphasis on academic development and achievement is fueled by the influences of EI and use of outcomes-based frameworks that use test scores as measures determined by public policies, which dwell on the development of skills considered most economically valuable in a capitalist economy (Allais, 2012; Croft et al., 2016). Because social and emotional skills are not easily measurable outputs, they are deemed less valuable than those of STEM. Public policies in the United States seem to inadvertently neglect SEL. A gap in scientific knowledge exists in the research literature regarding teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of the five SEL competencies. Without more research in this area, many benefits of SEL may remain unknown in public policy.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is the current model implemented in most U.S. schools to advance overall learning in the STEM areas, which the government has deemed valuable to the economic success of students in the future. Therefore, the value of this study pertains to the intersection of EI in public policy, particularly

regarding inclusion of social and emotional skills development into policies like the current CCSS policies. Social and emotional skills are not benchmarks of CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010); however, allusions to core social and emotional competencies do exist within the CCSS concepts. These hints of SEL buried within the CCSS indicate that social and emotional competencies may be necessary for meeting CCSS benchmarks.

As Stewart and Comallie-Caplan (2013) explained, "numerous examples exist within the CCSS that allude to the same five core SEL core competencies" (p. 15). For example, many of the CCSS speaking and listening standards for students in grades 6 through 12 use SEL language, such as rules for discussions, setting goals and deadlines, and understanding roles in society (CCSS Initiative, 2012). Additional SEL language used in the CCSS included working with peers in teams to solve problems and following rules for mutually respectful discussions (CCSS Initiative, 2012). This alignment of SEL competencies with CCSS benchmarks, and the growing interest among researchers and educators may be the beginning of addressing SEL needs for high school students. Therefore, including SEL in the curricula may actually help students meet the CCSS educational benchmarks.

Although the references to social and emotional skills in the CCSS are not specifically referred to as SEL, the existence of SEL verbiage indicates a possible shift in future public policy that will begin to acknowledge high school students' SEL needs. This shift will likely occur because public policy influences teacher education curricula, training programs, and professional development (Wiseman, 2012). Additionally, it is

known that teachers are informed of the importance of fostering students' social and emotional competence (SEC) through teacher career training and personal development. However, the concern is that current public policy in education, which is outcomes-based, largely relies on test scores as measures and often limits teachers' ability, due to current curricula demands, to address social emotional development in their students (Humphrey, 2013). These aspects are not measured and thus are not established as a factor in measuring student success. Current use of outcomes-based frameworks is policy driven and the focus is on test scores as the unit of measure. Given the lack of policy and measurement of SEL outcomes, research is needed to explore teachers' knowledge and classroom implementation of SEL. This research is needed because it may further SEL options in developing efficient output measures and future public policy reforms that benefit students' social emotional development in public high schools.

Problem Statement

Despite program implementations throughout the United States, state and federal educational mandates, such as the CCSS, elevated levels of poor self-management behaviors among students exist (Goux, Gurgand, & Maurin, 2015; Honken, & Ralston, 2013). A possible cause of this student behavior problem is the lack of emphasis placed on social and emotional development and corresponding policies in secondary grade education (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012; Castro-Olivo, 2014). Although the benefits of social and emotional skills in improving academic success and reducing problem behaviors are clear (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Durlak et al., 2011), SEL is rarely considered an

educational priority beyond the elementary years and thus is not mandated to be taught and is not a measurement of student success (Humphrey, 2013).

There is a lack of SEL in high school curriculum because the emphasis of public policy is on cognitive development and academic achievement based on data using outcomes-based frameworks (Cochran et al., 2009). This emphasis on academic development and achievement is fueled by the influences rooted in EI and outcomes-based policies in public education, which underscore the development of skills considered economically valuable in a capitalist economy (Allais, 2012; Croft et al., 2016). These factors make this study relevant to the discipline of public policy administration. Because social and emotional development are not considered skills with measurable outputs that can be used to accumulate wealth, public policies that shape U.S. education inadvertently neglect SEL (Garcia, 2016). In secondary grades, the focus shifts to outcomes-based testing to gauge academic achievement based on aspects of economic growth and stability, which is deemed important by policymakers following NL and EI philosophies (Humphrey, 2013).

I address these factors in this study to analyze the failure of public policy in education to address high school students' social and emotional needs. By way of mandated public policy, measurable outcomes on social skills could be studied and used in public education reforms and development. Consequently, gaps remain in the research literature regarding testing possible SEL policies for their potential benefits to public high school students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore teachers' self-reported knowledge and possible classroom implementation of the CASEL's five tenets. Specifically, I investigated what secondary teachers in public Title 1 high schools in southern California understand about these competencies to know how and whether they integrate these SEL competencies into classroom curricula. A better understanding of high school teachers' knowledge and implementation of curriculum that fosters social and emotional skills development may provide education stakeholders with direction for change. For example, if teachers indicate low levels of knowledge or implementation of certain competencies, policy leaders may consider professional development to provide educators with the implementation knowledge and training they need to foster high school students' SEC.

Paradigms of economic priorities in public policy take precedent over education practices in favor of developing economically sound human capital (Allais, 2012). The goals of this study were not to explore or explain the vast and ever-evolving theories and theoretical frameworks of public policy, as presented by numerous researchers (Schlager, 2007; Stokes Berry & Berry, 2014;). I strived to distinctively look at the phenomenon of public policy that relates to education development and reform in public policy to answer the research questions.

Research Questions

RQ1: Among teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how are policies related to SEL competencies for students understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

SQ1: Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' self-awareness understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

SQ2 Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' self-management understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

SQ3: Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' social awareness understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

SQ4: Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' relationship skills understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

SQ5: Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' decision-making skills understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was based on the social emotional learning tenets adapted by the CASEL. I selected these concepts to use as the lens for

which my data will be analyzed. The CASEL is a worldwide organization founded in 1994 with the goal of establishing social and emotional learning as an essential component of prekindergarten through high school education. To identify the elements of effective SEL programs, a group of researchers created the CASEL as an interdisciplinary team, which included individuals working in the fields of clinical psychology, school social work, and health education. This expert panel developed a list of 17 key competencies that effective SEL should include. These competencies were broken down into the following four categories: (a) Awareness of self and others, (b) positive attitudes and values, (c) responsible decision-making, and (d) social skills (Payton et al., 2000). The key competencies in the CASEL theories served as the foundation for this study's approach and aligned with the research questions. A more thorough presentation is made in Chapter 2.

In making the connection between this study, public policy, and delivery of outputs or services to the public, it is important to note outcomes-based frameworks that use high-stakes testing are used to influence public policy development and implementation in education reform, such as STEM programs. In addition, public policy is based on NI and EI thought. Neoliberalism is capitalistic, and sometimes referred to as global market-liberalism (Cochran et al., 2009). Neoliberalism tends to support the gap between economic classes, in favor of corporate conglomerates and the rich. Economic imperialism refers to economic and industrial aspects of society, such as crime, politics, war, prejudices, economic supply and demand, free trade, and organized religion (Allais, 2012; Ball, 2007; Fine & Milonakis, 2009). Outcomes-based frameworks have come to

overemphasize students' obtainment of measurable skills deemed most economically valuable, while disregarding students' social and emotional development. The problem with this EI influence of education public policy is the failure to nurture SEL skills, which are fundamental to students' development on many levels, not just their academic and economic success. Still, even if education public policy remains committed to the overvaluation of skillsets considered most marketable in a capitalist economy, it is important to acknowledge the fundamental role that social and emotional development plays in students' academic success.

Nature of the Study

I employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation, if any, of the five social and emotional areas of competencies. I investigated what secondary teachers in southern California Title 1 public high schools understand about these competencies. Additionally, I wanted to know if and how they may be integrating the five SEL tenets into classroom curriculum.

Qualitative research is inductive, as results emerge from the data rather than through hypothesis testing (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative investigations are appropriate when the aim of research is to understand social issues or the dimensions of human experiences (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). According to Yin (2009), qualitative methodology is appropriate when researchers understand little about a topic under investigation, the research variables are undefined, or supportive theories lack detail. These aspects support the qualitative nature of this

study as this study focuses on a social issue where standard hypothesis testing would not be possible.

The rationale was that a phenomenological design would allow for the examination of teachers' knowledge of SEL aspects and provide data on actual classroom implementation. This data from this study was investigated and measured in fall 2017, and may be limited due to a lack of public policies that address the topic of this research. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology is appropriate for exploring participants' lived experiences of a common phenomenon. The use of a phenomenological research method allowed me to explore participants' lived experiences in their classroom setting and gather information to develop themes and subthemes that provide information currently lacking in policy and the literature.

The data collection sources used in the study were individual semistructured interviews with high school teachers. The interview protocol was designed to explore the research questions. Study participants included 10 teachers of all subjects and levels at Title 1 schools in southern California racially diverse student populations. To be eligible for the study, participants had to be current and permanent teachers within this school district and possess at least 2 years of teaching experience. I used a phenomenological approach to data analysis. This study is important as the results help inform public policymakers and stakeholders in areas where the literature is limited or nonexistent.

Definitions

Academic achievement: Students' success, as measured by test scores, grades, academic ability, cognitive skills, or human capital (Roksa & Potter, 2011).

Adolescence: The period between the onset of puberty and one's achievement of self-sufficiency. The initial stages of adolescence are often thought of as biological, while the later stages are more social (Bogin, & Smith, 2000).

At-risk students: Students at risk of dropping out of school. Characteristics of at-risk students include those who have low SES, have siblings who have dropped out, are being raised in single parent homes, have failed a grade, or have changed schools multiple times (Horn & Carroll, 1997; Horn, Chen, & Adelman, 1998).

Classroom management: Activities (i.e., planning, organizing, leading, and controlling) performed by teachers that align with students' needs and educational goals. The aim of classroom management is to create learning environments conducive to the attainment of educational goals (Delceva, 2014).

Economic Imperialism (EI): The view that the economy could succeed independently of its social contexts; that is, an economic perspective in society of invading and overtaking noneconomic realms such as culture and social behaviors like prejudice, religion, war, and science (Allais, 2012; Fine & Milonakis, 2009).

Liberal or Liberalism: Members in society characteristically open to new opinions and behaviors and willing to discard traditional values in favor of the highest individual liberty (Cochran et al., 2009).

Neoclassical economics: A branch of economic thought holding indifference towards and neglect of the relationships between institutions, structures, and society. The markets of economics include goods and services, supply and demand, and reward systems (Allais, 2012).

Neoliberalism (NL): Modified forms of liberalism which tends to favor free-market capitalism (Cochran et al., 2009).

School belonging: A principal factor in academic achievement which refers to adolescents' sense of belonging or connectedness to school (Osterman, 2000).

Self-management: Behavioral techniques that help students change or maintain appropriate behaviors (Mooney, Ryan, Uhing, Reid, & Epstein, 2005).

Social awareness: One's ability to handle relationships effectively and demonstrate awareness of others' feelings and needs (Dwyer, 2013).

Social and emotional competence (SEC): One's ability to manage emotions and behaviors, problem solve, and act appropriately in a variety of social settings (Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, Hertzman, & Zumbo, 2014).

Social and emotional learning (SEL): The process by which, children and adults attain and skillfully apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for personal insight, to manage emotions, problem solve, set and achieve positive goals, experience and extend tolerance for differences in others. Also, the ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships, and responsible decision making (Civic Enterprises et al., 2013).

Sociocultural competence: Individual, cultural, and social factors that influence one's development. Such factors may include race, gender, SES, disability status, and geographic location (Garner, Mahatmya, Brown, & Vesely, 2014).

Title 1 high school: Institutions that fall under federal legislation for secondary education, enacted in 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson (Pub. L89-10, Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] of 1965). The purpose of this legislation was the

assurance of fair and substantial opportunities for academic achievement among low-income and disadvantaged students (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Assumptions

Assumptions describe factors outside of a researcher's control that one must assume to be true in order to conduct the study (Simon, 2011). Assumptions were inherent to the study. I assumed teachers were limited by current public policies, which fail to include policies that promote and mandate implementation of SEL tenets into public high school curricula. However, I assumed the teacher participants in this study had some SEL competencies gained through their education, training, and firsthand experiences. I assumed all participants answered the interview questions openly and honestly. To encourage this, interviews were held in closed private rooms and I kept the identities of all participants confidential, including the name of the specific public schools. Another assumption was that the interview protocol addressed the research questions and was free of perceived bias. Chapter 3 includes additional measures taken regarding this study.

Scope and Delimitations

The research problem for this study was poor self-management behaviors among high school students despite current public reform policies for schools. Literature reviewed concerning the problem makes it is apparent that students' social emotional development needs are not adequately addressed by current public policy, like CCSS. The study was bounded by this defined scope and certain delimiting factors.

A study's delimitations are its boundaries (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The scope of the study was limited to secondary teachers at Title 1 public high schools in southern California. Perspectives on SEL have some cultural, educational, and gender components. Even so, self-reported demographics of teachers were not gathered in this study but could be addressed in future research. Another delimiting factor was the conceptual framework of this study. Although an investigation of teachers' knowledge and implementation of SECs may be underpinned by a variety of frameworks, including education and social science theories, I chose to examine the issue from a public policy perspective. By taking this approach, my focus was on factors that influence public policy development and reform efforts, the reasons why these policies do not include SEL, and the actions needed to influence public policy so that SECs become a fundamental component of public high school curriculum.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge limitations of this research. First, the study was limited to California schools that met Title 1 criteria. Different high schools with different student demographics, cultures, and geographic locations may produce different results. The study was also bounded by time in that data collection occurred at one point in time, Fall 2017, rather than several different points in time. The methods used in participant recruitment was a purposive sampling with two data collection methods, in-person interviews, and telephone interviews, each of these factors may contribute to limitations in the study. Additionally, as this study pertained to issues from a public policy perspective in public high schools, SEL implementation in private school

classrooms was not addressed. Thus, knowledge of SEL as it relates to private schools was not explored nor considered, which adds another limitation that can provide for future areas of research.

Other limitations to consider were potential transferability, which refers to the generalizability of findings (Merriam, 2009), which are typically not good for qualitative studies with low sample sizes. Personal biases and preconceived notions were avoided to prevent data from being influenced by my thoughts and feelings. I isolated my individual opinions and biases by maintaining epoché and bracketing. Also, my professional education and career experiences aided in being nonbiased in this study. Clinical social work, education, and career training require being nonbiased with the populations served.

Significance

This study is significant because the results contribute information regarding if and how SEL aspects are being implemented in the classroom and in what ways, despite the lack of specific SEL policy mandating teachers do so. Currently, researchers know from the lack of public policy and curricula that SEL is not mandated to be taught in schools. Although this would suggest that SEL is not being taught in the classroom, some evidence in the form of overall teacher education and SEL language in the Common Core model suggests that SEL may be implemented in the classroom, but how and to what extent is unknown. Given this lack of evidence in the literature and that teachers may be limited by CCSS mandates already in place in the curricula, and because of the lack of SEL policy, the topic of teachers' perceptions of SEL concepts and the possible

implementations of SEL was the focal point of the study. Addressing the research questions provided new knowledge to advance public policies that include SEL curricula in public high schools.

From biological and social perspectives, adolescence is one of the most complex periods in human development (Blakemore & Mills, 2014; Burnett, Thompson, Bird, & Blakemore, 2011). Despite the intricacies of adolescence development, SEL is not incorporated at high school level practices, which could help students to address common issues like risky behaviors and positive goal setting (Hamedani, Zheng, & Darling-Hammond, 2015). Understanding teachers' practices regarding SEL at the high school level may assist policymakers, administrators, and teachers in creating public policies that implement SEL into the curriculum. In addition, the results may create positive social change by advancing policy reform. Literature suggests policymakers must begin to consider social emotional skills as fundamental to achieving desired outcomes in public policies (Hamedani et al., 2015). The literature review in Chapter 2 provides further information regarding such policies.

Another significance of the results of this study is that the results may significantly influence economically disadvantaged and minority students in Title 1 high schools. A review of the literature suggested that if the outcomes of SEL were emphasized more in public policymaking (thus mandated to be taught in public school classrooms), increased success may help close the achievement gap for low SES student populations and increase their economic success throughout life (Wiseman, 2012). The

results of this study may help fill the gaps in academic performance and career success that plague economically disadvantaged and minority students in Title 1 high schools.

Summary

Social and emotional skills may improve a student's sense of belonging, counteract problem behaviors, reduce destructive racial stereotypes, and improve academic achievement (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Humphrey, 2013). Thus, SEL may be an important factor in students' success on many levels, including improving performance in STEM subjects that are currently the focus of policymakers who are motivated by NL and EI viewpoints. Even so, despite the benefits of SEL on overall student engagement in the classroom, public policies that incorporate SEL in CCSS have yet to be developed. Furthermore, teacher training programs rarely prepare educators with specific SEL strategies to implement SEL in the classroom, despite evidence that teachers are interested in such trainings (CASEL, 2015). Although there are no policy mandates to implement SEL competencies, teachers may be teaching these skills in the classroom, although the level to which this is done and in what manner is unknown. Through this study, I aimed to explore whether and how SEL tenets are used in in the curriculum and to explore teachers' perspectives on SEL that are missing in the literature.

In this chapter, I contextualized the study by providing the background of the problem, leading to the problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, and conceptual framework. Additionally, the chapter included the study's nature, definition of terms, assumptions, scope, delimitations, limitations, and significance. Chapter 2

provides an in-depth analysis and synthesis of the existing body of literature on SEL and adolescence. Chapter 3 contains details of the methodology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Public policymakers have failed to address public high school students' SEL, as current policies do not regard SEL outcomes as significant. Despite the efforts of educational programs and policies throughout the United States, such as the CCSS, elevated levels of poor self-management behaviors among students exist (Goux et al., 2015; Honken, & Ralston, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of the five SEL competencies: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills.

Public education is government funded and therefore education policies are public policy driven. For example, as discussed in Chapter 1, numerous policies have influenced the education system in the United States, including what factors are acceptable measures of success—most of which are based on desired outcomes. Examples of public policies derived from the desire to create certain outcomes are the CCSS and STEM federally funded programs currently in public schools around the nation.

Most policies that guide curriculum and implementation and measure educational success focus on the achievement factors that are most beneficial to the U.S. economic system. One public educational policy using outcomes-based frameworks that test measurements is high stakes or standardized testing, which is used at all levels of public schools in most states. California implemented the California High School Exit Exam in 2003. This exam is provided to 11th- and 12th-grade students in the areas of reading and

mathematics and must be passed prior to receiving a diploma. If the student does not pass the California High School Exit Exam in both areas, the student does not receive a diploma regardless of whether the student met all other criteria to graduate from high school. If a student meets all other criteria but does not pass the California High School Exit Exam, he or she receives a certificate of completion instead of a diploma. This process is a clear example of public policy that focuses on what has been politically and economically deemed beneficial features, like science and other technologies as exhibited in STEM programs. Consequently, social and emotional skills that benefit academic, behavioral, and social aspects of the student and contribute to their developmental growth, such as their mental and emotional wellbeing, are valuable at the adolescent stage. These students' social emotional needs are neglected as their social and emotional qualities are not deemed financially advantageous to society. This neglect is an example of outcomes-based frameworks at work, as the idea of the end goal is success and achievement.

The benefits of social and emotional skills in improving academic success and reducing problem behaviors is supported by the literature reviewed in this chapter (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Durlak et al., 2011). However, SEL is rarely considered an educational priority beyond the elementary years and thus is not mandated to be taught and measured as a factor in student success (Humphrey, 2013). Despite state and federal mandates in policies such as CCSS, elevated levels of poor self-management behaviors persist among students (Goux et al., 2015; Honken & Ralston, 2013). A possible cause of this student behavior problem is the lack of emphasis placed

on social and emotional development in secondary grades (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Brackett et al., 2012; Castro-Olivo, 2014). Government entities and public policymakers are neglecting to address students' SEL needs in public high school curricula.

The problem addressed in this study is relevant and specific to public policy because current CCSS policies and the federally-funded STEM program curricula are outcomes-based driven, in that a desired outcome in students is the motivation behind these policies. Thus, curricula are the by-products of student test scores used as the unit of measurement to determine what topics to promote in the classroom. Still, due to works by prominent professionals and researchers like Dweck (2006), extensive research has been completed on emotional intelligence and adolescence, achievement goals, and motivation, increasing attention to the social and emotional components of academic success. Civic Enterprises have found that education professionals believe SEL is critical to academic success (Civic Enterprises et al., 2013). Social and emotional learning strategies are of particular importance for low-income and minority students because of the role SEL may play in addressing the socioeconomic achievement gap (Hamedani et al., 2015). As Hamedani et al. (2015) explained, "failing to meet students' psychological, social, and emotional needs will continue to fuel gaps in opportunity for students – in particular, low-income students and students of color – who are […] left behind" (p. 2).

Through this study, I looked at the phenomenon of public policy that relates to education development and reforms in education practices to determine what the literature indicates relating to the problem of this study. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom

implementation of the five SEL competencies: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills. These are the five SEL tenets developed by the CASEL. Specifically, I investigated what secondary teachers in Title 1 public high schools understand about these competencies as well whether or not, and how they might integrate them into classroom curriculum.

Because prior research has indicated that SEL strategies may improve academic success, particularly among minority and low SES students (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Hamedani et al., 2015), additional research is needed to understand teachers' knowledge and implementation of SEL in the classroom. The review of the literature for this study supports that there are no public policies on use of SEL, or the specific evidence-based tenets of SEL, for teachers in public high school classrooms. However, although there may not be policies mandating the use of SEL and SEL-related concepts, it is possible that teachers are using these skills anyway. This phenomenological study adds to the literature in this area by providing information on what aspects of SEL are or are not being implemented in classrooms as well as if and how SEL competencies are being implemented.

This chapter includes a description of the search strategy employed to locate relevant literature and what information is provided in the literature including conceptual frameworks and a comprehensive analysis of the existing body of research on SEL and adolescent students. I also discuss current public policy theories and policy frameworks. The chapter closes with a brief summary and concluding remarks.

Literature Search Strategy

I used several online databases to locate the majority of the literature for this chapter, including Academic Search Premier, ERIC, FirstSearch, JSTOR, ProQuest, APA PsycNET, SAGE, LexisNexis, EBSCO, Thoreau Academic Search Complete, and Gale InfoTrac. Google Scholar and Walden University's online library were also used to locate journal articles and seminal studies. When possible, searches were limited to documents published within the last 5 years; however, seminal studies published in earlier years were included as appropriate. A variety of search terms were employed: co*ntemporary education policy*, *human capital*, *U.S. public policy*, *economics and public policy*, *policy agenda*, *liberal policy agenda*, *EI*, *neoliberalism*, *policy*, *social and emotional learning*, *SEL*, *social emotional competencies*, *SEC*, *self-efficacy*, *educational barriers*, *adolescence*, *high school*, *low SES students*, *developmental learning*, *self-awareness*, *self-management skills*, *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning*, *CASEL*, *cultural competence*, *emotional intelligence*, *SEL programs*, *student success skills*, *academic performance*, *student behavior*, *Common Core*, and *classroom management*.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was based on the foundations set forth by the CASEL. I selected the CASEL's five tenets of SEL as the foundation for this study and used these as the lens for analyzing participant data because CASEL is the renowned experts on SEL research studies, practices, and implementation of SEL concepts. To identify the elements of effective SEL programs, an interdisciplinary team, including

individuals working in the fields of clinical psychology, school social work, health education, and community studies collaborated to create the CASEL. This expert panel developed a list of 17 key competencies that effective SEL programs should include. These competencies were broken down into the following four categories: Awareness of self and others, positive attitudes and values, responsible decision-making, and social skills (Payton et al., 2000). These key competencies were the foundation of the study approach and aligned with the research questions.

The connection between this study, public policy, and delivery of outputs or services to the public is that outcomes-based frameworks that utilize high-stakes testing influence public policy development and implementation in education reform. This, in turn, implies that public policy mandates, like those associated with STEM programs, are economically driven. In addition, public policy is constructed on influences from NL and EI thought. Neoliberalism is capitalistic, and sometimes referred to as global market-liberalism. Neoliberalism helps support the gap between economic classes, in favor of corporate conglomerates and the rich (Allais, 2012). Economic imperialist or empiricism perspectives refers to noneconomic and industrial aspects of society, such as crime, politics, war, prejudices, economic supply and demand, free trade, and organized religion (Allais, 2012; Ball, 2007; Fine & Milonakis, 2009). Outcomes-based frameworks have come to overemphasize students' obtainment of measurable skills deemed as most economically valuable, while disregarding students' social and emotional development. The problem with this economic imperialist influence on public policy is the failure to nurture SEL skills, which are fundamental to students' development on many levels, not

just their academic and economic success. Still, even if public policy remains committed to the overvaluation of skillsets considered most marketable in a capitalist economy, it is important to acknowledge the fundamental role that social and emotional development plays in students' behavioral and academic success.

Literature Review

General Public Policy Development

To understand the influence of public policy on education, it is imperative to have an overall understanding of policy in general and how public policies are formulated. Public policy describes governmental actions and the intentions behind those actions (Cochran et al., 2009). Cochran et al. (2009), described policy development and implementation as a seven-stage process consisting of prepolicy stages and policy stages. Prepolicy stages include defining the problem, determining the demands of a policy, and forming a policy agenda. The policy stages include adoption of the policy, policy implementation, policy evaluation, and redefining or reevaluating the original problem (Cochran et al., 2009). Outputs describe the "tangible manifestations of policies, the observable and measurable results of policy adoption and implementation" (Cochran et al., 2009, p. 10). Of particular salience to this research were the stages of implementation and evaluation, as I analyzed aspects and variations of SEL that are actually being implemented and the fact that there are currently no associated instruments of measures, inputs, or outputs for SEL aspects for students in secondary grades. Implementation requires measurable outputs and impacts.

Impacts describe the measurable effects of a policy. To assess whether a particular policy is effective or in need of revision, the policy must be evaluated. Policy evaluation is centered on policy impacts because a policy is assessed as a success or failure based on performance (Cochran et al., 2009). If the intention of public policy is to improve different aspects of society, it is critical to continually evaluate policies to determine if the policy is having intended impacts. Increasingly, public policy changes require objective performance evaluation under the assumption that increased accountability creates superior outcomes (Clinton & Grissom, 2015). Public policy reforms are usually based on accountability measures (James, 2010).

The U.S. educational system has been the subject of extensive policy development and reform since the 1990s (Croft et al., 2016). Starting in the 1990s, states began annually assessing students against grade and subject-based standards to determine school performance ratings (Clinton & Grissom, 2015). For example, the public policy, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; Ho, 2008), mandated the creation of test-based report cards for every school district in the United States. The neoliberal rationale behind publishing school performance data was the belief that,

> such information empowers parents (or the community) to pressure relevant decision-makers – including school staff, local school board members, state officials and others – to increase the performance of less effective schools by finding additional resources or using existing resources more efficiently. (Clinton & Grissom, 2015, p. 357)

This NCLB Act of 2001 and the previously discussed CCSS and similar predecessors represent more than a decade of public policy reforms in education designed to improve academic achievement and address inequities among children of low SES (Croft et al., 2016). However, as Croft et al. (2016) explained, "these policies have in fact expanded inequities and exacerbated a discourse of failure regarding teachers, public schools, and teacher preparation programs" (p. 70). In its simplest terms, a review of the literature suggests that these programs have not accomplished the intended goals.

Outcomes-Based Frameworks

The impacts of public education policies are assessed via outcomes-based frameworks that use data from standardized tests that are administered to students in the school classroom. Allais (2012) proposed the growing popularity and acceptance of outcomes-based frameworks that fuel a *testing industrial complex* is because of policy language that seems to address educators' concerns while drawing on ideas and theories largely supported by them. According to Allais, outcomes-based frameworks are part of the policy reform mechanism designed to promise better educational access and academic achievement.

At the center of these frameworks are high-stakes tests, which Croft et al. (2016) referred to as the "testing industrial complex" (p. 72). According to the scholars, the testing industrial complex is "an attempted system of education reform catalyzed by standardized testing that emerged with NCLB" and "a high-pressure front that creates ideal storm/reform conditions for education at the state and national levels" (Croft et al., 2016, p. 72). Croft et al. compared the testing industrial complex to the prison industrial

complex, arguing that both systems employed surveillance and policing measures to enforce education reforms designed to solve problems that are actually economic, social, and political issues. Outcomes-based frameworks and the testing industrial complex have resulted in the increasing use of high-stakes testing, despite failures of such testing to improve students' outcomes.

The three factors that make up the testing industrial complex include (a) excessive use of high-stakes testing, (b) false political narratives about education improvements, and (c) the transfer of governance over school curriculum and finances from individual schools to state and national bureaus (Croft et al., 2016). As Croft et al. (2016) explained,

> Across the United States, high-stakes testing policies have caused a trickle-down effect in which politicians put pressure to increase standardized test scores on school boards and superintendents, superintendents put pressure on principals, principals on teachers, and teachers on students – all too little or to no avail. (p. 74)

Although more than 12 years of evidence reveals that the focus of public policy on accountability and testing is counterproductive to improving academic achievement, policymakers remain committed to these efforts.

Croft et al. (2016) described an evaluation system for K–12 education that includes the establishment of the failure discourse, evaluation methods, assessment tools, standards, consortiums, and catalysts. Croft et al. specified the following,

1. Failure discourse used to justify the need for policy development and/or revision.

2. Evaluation methods to assess the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs (i.e., Teacher/Leader Keys Evaluation System, Student Learning Objectives).
3. Assessment tools to measure effectiveness of professional development and preservice teacher training (i.e., Teacher Assessment of Performance).
4. Standards designed to encourage curricular rigor (i.e., CCSS).
5. Consortiums held to develop evaluation tools for student achievement.
6. Catalysts used to connect evaluative measures through state and federal funding (p. 77).

Economic Imperialism and Education Public Policy

The goals of public policies, concerning education to which, assessments and outcomes-based frameworks are based, are largely influenced by economics (Allais, 2012; Ball, 2007). According to Ball (2007), economic imperatives increasingly influence U.S. public policies. Economic Imperialism describes the domination of noneconomic disciplines by the tools of neoclassical economics (Allais, 2012) and attempts to reduce or eliminate individuals' noneconomic or social factors (Milonakis & Fine, 2009). Economic Imperialism is based on neoclassical economics, which describes an economic approach related to supply, demand, and individuals' abilities to maximize profits. Neoliberalism is a foundation to capitalism that has become institutionalized in U.S. social policies (Caplan & Ricciardelli, 2016). Neoclassical economics requires the reduction of the economy to a supply-and-demand market, stripped of social aspects and institutions (Fine & Milonakis, 2009). Human capital is an important concept that

connects neoclassical economics and outcomes-based frameworks to effect U.S. public policy and reform in education (Allais, 2012). Allais (2012) explained,

> Amongst other things, qualifications frameworks are seen as tools to improve individuals' ability to make rational choices about investment in learning, and governments' ability to regulate and support markets to supply education and training. (p. 263)

Considering the influence of EI on public policy, the emphasis on education has shifted almost entirely to the promotion of individuals' abilities to compete economically and accumulate wealth (Lundahl, 2012). To promote education as an economic tool, education systems and school actors have been re-casted as markets, entrepreneurs, and enterprises (Lundahl, 2012). Consequently, the economic dimension of education now outweighs other goals of education, and assessment instruments and benchmarks serve as accountability measures to ensure students efficiently obtain the knowledge and skills considered most marketable in a capitalist economy. Thus, high-stakes tests are regulatory tools by which the government can measure education quality. From a perspective of EI, a quality education is one that equips individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to make money and become economic producers.

Missing Component in Public Policy Efforts

Educational success has been obtained throughout the world in institutions that look beyond standards-based measures, such as providing students with social services and ensuring teachers have access to effective professional development (Berlinger, Glass, & Associates, 2014; Ripley, 2013; Sahlberg, 2011). Public policy that combines an

outcomes-based framework and an economic imperialist perspective fails to acknowledge important social, psychological, and emotional factors that can significantly influence students' academic performance. As Cohen and Garcia (2014) explained, "Changes in student psychology can have a large impact on their learning, test performance, and even college prospects" (p. 14). In a society where economic demands take priority, "the overvaluation of material rewards, from gold stars to golden parachutes, obscures the importance of purpose, social connection, and the need to see ourselves as competent" (Cohen & Garcia, 2014, p. 16). In public policy, the use of incentive programs, such as teachers' performance pay, or class funding based on school grades, exemplifies the popularity of extrinsic, performance-based rewards. As with public policy in other factions of society colored by EI, the failure to look at students holistically—as individuals with capabilities and needs that extend beyond their potential to become economic producers in society—represents a massive hole in public policy.

Adolescence

Adolescence is a stage that begins with the onset of puberty and includes physical, social, and cognitive changes (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). Puberty has a significant effect on the brain, making adolescence a time of susceptibility and sensitivity to social environments (Burnett et al., 2011; Peper & Dahl, 2013). The opinions and influences of peers are significant during adolescence, as is the need to belong. Blakemore and Mills (2014) explained, "it appears that the desire to be accepted by one's peers, and avoidance of social rejection, is particularly acute in adolescence and might drive adolescent behavior" (p. 189). According to Sebastian, Burnett, and Blakemore (2008), individuals'

self-awareness and self-concepts undergo acute development during the adolescent years. This increased sensitivity to evaluation by their peers can affect how adolescents process social emotions such as shame, pride, and guilt (Blakemore & Mills, 2014).

Individuals' social environments change significantly during adolescence because of the transition from elementary to middle school. During this time, students may be placed with new peer groups, immersed in different learning structures and classroom environments, and find themselves at the bottom of school hierarchy. Adolescents are increasingly likely to engage in risky behaviors as they hone their decision-making skills (Ellis et al., 2014). A variety of cognitive functions, including the speed at which the brain processes information, working memory, and planning, also develop during adolescence (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). Increased levels of neural plasticity in the brain during adolescence create opportunities for teaching; however, educators must understand how to harness changes in social and emotional processing, such as increased levels of risk-taking, as opportunities for increased creativity rather than as barriers to learning (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). Because social functioning has a significant effect on learning, better understandings of the neural basis of socioemotional function may help stakeholders facilitate improvements on adolescents' academic performance (Burnett et al., 2011).

Understanding Social and Emotional Learning

Emotions play a significant role in the ways individuals behave, think, function, and adapt, as well as their levels of motivation (Lopes, Mestre, Guil, Kremenitzer, & Salovey, 2012). Emotions help individuals identify opportunities, manage threats, interact

socially, and engage in learning (Castro-Olivo, 2014). However, unmanaged emotional responses can interfere with information processing, decision-making, and social interactions (Durlak et al., 2011). As Lopes et al. (2012) explained, "Appropriate emotion regulation is thought to contribute to social, emotional, and academic adaptation" (p. 3). Students who are unable to control their emotional responses and limit impulsive behaviors tend to struggle in school, their careers, and with social interactions throughout their lives (Ee, Zhou, & Wong, 2014; Humphrey, 2013).

Teaching and learning have strong social and emotional components (Elias et al., 1997). Students do not learn in a vacuum, but through collaboration with teachers and peers, and the involvement of their families (Durlak, et al., 2011). Because of the influence of social interactions and emotions in learning, educators must address social and emotional components of student development to maximize students' education (Durlak et al., 2011). Social emotional learning describes the development of an individual's identity and his or her concepts of self, family, and peers, which undergo significant changes during the adolescent years (Elias et al., 1997). During adolescence, individuals begin to separate their own identities from those of their parents, based on how they see themselves fitting into society. These changes in identity can result in insecurity, worry, and stress about fitting in or others' opinions (Dugas, Laugesen, & Bukowski, 2012). Adolescence represents a time when individuals become independent thinkers with an increased sense of morals and ethics (Wirth, 2012). It is also a time of developing socially acceptable behaviors and learning how to communicate effectively

with the opposite sex (Wirth, 2012). According to Blakemore, and Mills (2014), social and emotional functioning is fundamental to such developmental learning.

Despite the importance of social and emotional skills in academic performance, many students lack competence in these areas (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Humphrey, 2013). Consequently, they may feel less connected as they progress through their school years. In turn, this lack of connectedness can negatively affect students' academic performance, health, and behaviors (Ashdown, & Bernard, 2012; Humphrey, 2013). Individuals who possess SEC are "able to understand, reflect on, and manage their own emotions and behaviors, solve problems successfully, and act appropriately in social situations at home, school, and in the community" (Oberle et al., 2014, p. 139). In classroom settings, SEC reflects students' abilities to collaborate with peers and function socially (January, Casey, & Paulson, 2011). By the time they reach high school, many students are chronically disengaged from academics (Goux et al., 2015). Further, during high school years, increasing engagement with destructive behaviors, such as substance abuse and violence, can negatively affect academic performance (Honken & Ralston, 2013).

Educational stakeholders agree that the public education system should produce students, who are proficient in core subjects, possess skills to collaborate with others from diverse backgrounds, and behave responsibly and respectfully (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2012). In a national survey of teachers, 75% of respondents believed that nurturing students' SEC would improve their academic success (Civic Enterprises et al., 2013). Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, and Salovey (2012)

argued that SEC helps students develop positive relationships in classroom settings, regulate their emotional responses, and behave appropriately. In turn, these competencies allow them to focus on academic learning, thus improving academic performance (Brackett et al., 2012). Despite these beliefs from teachers and researchers, public policymakers have yet to directly address SEC, especially among secondary students (Humphrey, 2013).

Although scholars agree about the importance of social and emotional learning, many students enter school without the social and emotional competencies they need to succeed (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Students who lack SEC often struggle to develop healthy relationships with teachers and peers, which reduce their feelings of classroom connectedness and negatively affects academic performance (Brackett et al., 2012). As Durlak et al. (2011) explained, schools are fundamental to fostering students' cognitive development, as well as their social and emotional skills. However, the resources available to schools to nurture students' SEC are often scarce because most funds are appropriated for cognitive skill development because of emphasis on skills believed to be more economically valuable (Allais, 2012; Croft et al., 2016). Hamedani et al. (2015) referred to the lack of SEL in schools as the missing piece of accountability-driven policies, which largely affect schools' operations. Thus, it is essential to implement effective, evidence-based approaches to SEL to balance time and resource restraints (Durlak et al., 2011).

School-based SEL programs have promising effects on students' academic performance and success throughout life (Jones & Bouffard, 2012), of which

policymakers must become aware. Proficiency in SEL competencies is associated with academic and personal success, while the failure to develop core social and emotional skills is associated with academic failure and personal difficulties (Eisenberg, 2006; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). SEL describes the acquisition of core competencies required to manage emotions, set and achieve goals, appreciate others' perspectives, maintain healthy relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations (Elias et al., 1997). As Jones and Bouffard (2012) explained, social and emotional skills develop over time, just as academic skills do.

The goal of SEL programs is to help students develop skills in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2015). Such programs include instruction in social and emotional skill development, which is culturally and contextually appropriate in safe and caring school environments (Durlak et al., 2011). The development of SEL helps individuals act in accordance with beliefs and values that demonstrate care and concern for others, healthy decisions, and personal accountability (Durlak et al., 2011). In school settings, SEL programs may help improve students' attitudes towards themselves and others, increase prosocial behaviors, reduce emotional distress, and improve academic performance (CASEL, 2015).

Research in a variety of fields, including developmental psychology, mental health, emotional intelligence, and moral and character education form the theoretical foundation of SEL (Brackett et al., 2012; Humphrey, 2013). Social and emotional skills include the following, (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, (c) social awareness, (d)

relationship skills, and (e) responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2015). Self-awareness describes an individual's ability to recognize his or her strengths, weaknesses, and feelings. Self-management describes the ability to regulate emotions, delay gratification, motivate oneself, manage stress, and set goals. One's ability to empathize describes his or her social awareness. Relationship skills include the ability to communicate, listen, cooperate, and resolve conflicts. Finally, responsible decision-making describes the ability to base decisions on one's feelings, goals, outcomes, and anticipated obstacles (Elias, 2014). The SEL competencies outlined by the CASEL involve cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills, such as collaboration and respect for opposing perspectives, which students need to function in society (Hamedani et al., 2015).

According to Durlak et al. (2011), SEL practices can be implemented via instructional or environmental approaches. Instructional approaches involve explicit instruction in SEC, while environmental approaches involve the creation of safe and caring learning environments that involve student and parent initiatives, classroom management, and school or community building activities (Durlak et al., 2011). The theory behind school-based SEL is that when social and emotional competencies are taught and fostered in classroom settings, students will become more engaged with school and participate in fewer risky behaviors, which will lead to improvements in academic performance and social function (Humphrey, 2013).

CASEL

The CASEL is a worldwide organization founded in 1994 with the goal of establishing social and emotional learning as an essential component of pre-Kindergarten

through high school education. To identify the elements of effective social and emotional learning programs, the CASEL was created as an interdisciplinary team, which included individuals working in the fields of clinical psychology, school social work, health education, and in the community. This expert panel developed a list of 17 key competencies that effective social and emotional learning programs should include. These competencies were broken down into the following four categories, (a) awareness of self and others, (b) positive attitudes and values, (c) responsible decision-making, and (d) social skills (Payton et al., 2000). Table 1 presents the key competencies for each of these categories.

Table 1

Key Competencies of Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs

SEL Category	Key Competencies
Awareness of self and others	• Awareness of feelings • Management of feelings • Constructive sense of self • Perspective taking
Positive attitudes and values	• Personal responsibility • Respect for others • Social responsibility
Responsible decision-making	• Problem identification • Social norm analysis • Adaptive goal setting • Problem solving
Social interaction skills	• Active listening • Expressive communication • Cooperation • Negotiation • Refusal • Help seeking

These key competencies formed the basis for the conceptual framework and interview protocol in the study. I examined the research questions by investigating teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of the social and emotional competencies.

SEL Research

A challenge with developing effective SEL programs is that the concept has been broadly defined under the umbrellas of psychology, neuroscience, and education (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). SEL encompasses a variety of focuses, including emotional regulation, prosocial skills, behavioral problems, character education, conflict resolution,

and character development (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). In response to the variety of concepts associated with SEL research, Jones and Bouffard (2012) developed an organizing framework based on existing studies and developmental theories. The core of the model consists of SEL skills grouped into the following three categories: (a) emotional processes, which include emotional knowledge, regulation, and empathy; (b) social and interpersonal skills, which include the ability to interpret social cues and others' behaviors, navigate social situations, and demonstrate prosocial behavior; and (c) cognitive regulation, which includes attention control, the ability to control inappropriate responses, memory, and set shifting (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). In the model, these three core skillsets correlate with the following positive outcomes: (a) academic achievement, (b) behavioral adjustment, and (c) emotional wellbeing. In the context of the school environment, Jones and Bouffard outlined two areas: school and classroom culture, and SEL implementation. The model illustrates how social and emotional competencies develop through dynamic systems of relationships, social interactions, and environmental contexts. Thus, the researchers suggested that schools must employ a systems approach to promote SEL that matches the needs and contexts of individual communities and schools (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

In addition to behavioral and social benefits, SEL may also improve students' academic performance. Oberle et al. (2014) conducted an investigation to explore the relationship between SEC and academic achievement among a sample of 461 sixth-grade students located in seven school districts throughout Canada. The researchers pulled data from three points in time. Researchers obtained participants' baseline data from their

fourth-grade scores on the Foundational Skills Assessment, an annual standardized test of academic achievement. The second data point included students' self-reported demographics, scores on a social responsibility survey, and teachers' reports of students' social and emotional skills. Finally, researchers collected the third data point halfway through the school year, in the form of students' scores on the assessment.

Data analysis revealed that reading achievement could be predicted by adolescents' perceptions of their social responsibilities and teachers' reports of students' SEC (Oberle et al., 2014). The researchers explained that teacher- and student-reported SEC jointly explained significant variance in reading scores. Gender seemed to be an important factor. Oberle et al. (2014) reported social responsibility goals predicted changes in reading achievement among boys, but not among girls. The researchers posited that this finding was because of differences in social competencies between boys and girls. On average, girls tend to have higher levels of SEC and demonstrate more prosocial behaviors than do boys (e.g., Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004; Jaffee & Hyde, 2000). Oberle et al. also found SEC was a significant factor in math achievement.

In addition to benefitting students, school implementation of SEL programs may also have a positive effect on teachers (Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2011, 2012). For example, Brackett et al. (2010) conducted a study of 123 teachers in England to examine the relationship between teachers' emotion-regulation abilities (a social-emotional competency), job satisfaction, and burnout. Study results indicated emotion-regulation abilities were positively associated with principal support, job satisfaction, burnout, and sense of accomplishment.

Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, and Jacobson (2009) investigated how elementary teachers' implementation of an SEL program affected their perceptions of burnout, efficacy, and supports. Data revealed a negative association between SEL practices and teacher burnout. Research by Collie et al. (2011) indicated SEL practices were related to higher levels of teacher commitment. Finally, Collie et al. (2012) found a correlation between teachers' SEL practices and their job satisfaction, stress, and efficacy. Because these three teacher outcomes (job satisfaction, stress, and efficacy) significantly related to student and school outcomes, SEL practices may not only be directly beneficial to students, but student achievement may also improve when SEL programs are implemented because of the positive effects of these practices on teachers (Collie et al., 2012).

Teachers' Social and Emotional Competence

The SEC of teachers is integral to improving students' SEC. Teachers who possess SEC create classroom environments conducive to SEL because they are able to design lessons that build on students' strengths, foster supportive and encouraging student-teacher relationships, implement classroom rules that encourage intrinsic motivation, teach students how to resolve conflict, encourage cooperative learning, and serve as role models for prosocial behaviors (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). According to Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, and Salovey (2010), classroom environments that foster SEL are better organized and provide students with higher levels of emotional support. When teachers lack SEC or the resources to facilitate SEL in the classroom, students often demonstrate lower levers of academic performance and more behavioral

disruptions (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). In addition, teacher deficits in SEC can result in teacher burnout because of poor student behavior and performance, which can cause teachers to become reactive, excessively punitive, and create sustained cycles of disruption (Brackett, et al., 2010; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teacher burnout can have significantly negative effects on individual students and classroom environments, and may cause teachers to become bitter, disengaged, or to leave the profession completely (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Socially and emotionally competent teachers possess prominent levels of self- and social-awareness. They understand their emotional patterns and tendencies and can generate positive emotions to excite and motivate their students. They also understand how their own emotions affect others and are able to build strong relationships founded on cooperation, conflict resolution, and mutual understanding (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). They understand how to set firm boundaries while maintaining respect for students and can manage their emotions when students challenge them. In addition, SEC relates to teachers' professional wellbeing, effectiveness, and job satisfaction (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). Despite the importance of teacher SEC, in-service training and professional development rarely address these competencies. Rather, as Jennings and Greenberg (2009) pointed out,

> The current educational system appears to assume that teachers have the requisite SEC to create a warm and nurturing learning environment, be emotionally responsive to students, form supportive and collaborative relationships with sometimes difficult and demanding parents,

> professionally relate to administrators and colleagues, effectively manage the growing demands imposed by standardized testing, model exemplary emotion regulation, sensitively coach students through conflict situations with peers, and effectively (yet respectfully) handle challenging behaviors of disruptive students. (p. 495)

Jennings and Greenberg argued that although a host of SEL programs provide teachers with lessons to facilitate students' SEC, such programs do not provide teachers with explicit instruction on how to foster their own SEC.

Why SEL is Critical to Low SES Adolescents

Although SEC is beneficial to all students and teachers, the failure to meet social and emotional needs can be especially detrimental to low-income and minority students (Hamedani et al., 2015). Research on SEL programs among low SES and at-risk students indicates that the positive effects of such programs may be particularly significant for these students (Jones, Brown, & Aber, 2011). Achievement and opportunity gaps evident among low-income and minority students may be reduced by understanding how their social and emotional needs are neglected at school, and then implementing interventions to meet those needs (Carter, 2013; Farrington et al., 2012; Hamedani et al., 2015). Hamedani et al. (2015) posited that although social and emotional supports cannot address problems of poverty or systematic disadvantages among low SES students, they may help reframe students' perceptions of themselves as learners and the importance of education. In addition, supporting low SES students' social and emotional needs may nurture trust and community in schools, reduce biases and stereotypes, and foster the

development of skills needed to apply learning in meaningful and relevant ways (Hamedani et al., 2015).

The benefits of SEL to low SES students by way of addressing the achievement gap were particularly salient to this research study. A significant goal of public policies, such as CCSS and high-stakes testing, is the reduction of educational inequities (Croft et al., 2016). Still, as Croft et al. (2016) pointed out, the achievement gap remains a major problem despite such policies. Closing the achievement gap faced by low SES students would require stakeholders to address SEL by acknowledging the importance of the environments and contexts in which learning takes place, not just the academic content of what is taught (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Boykin and Noguera (2011) argued that attention must be paid to (a) how low SES students engage with the learning process, (b) what educators can do to nurture students' sense of academic self-efficacy, and (c) how educators can create learning situations that allow students to develop personally, relationally, culturally, and cognitively. Stakeholders must do more than simply provide low SES students with access to education; they must also understand the roles of SEC (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Students need more than just academic skills to be successful in college, their careers, and their lives (Elias, 2014).

In a comprehensive study on the effects of SEL programs on low SES and minority students, Hamedani et al. (2015) conducted case studies of three highly effective urban high schools with existing SEL programs in Boston, Brooklyn, and San Antonio. The researchers aimed to explore the ways SEL was designed, implemented, and practiced in these schools. The three study site schools integrated SEL and social justice

education to foster students' personal and academic success. A panel of subject matter experts nominated the schools, which all had established, school-wide SEL programs and racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse student bodies. The researchers collected data from a variety of sources, including observations, document analysis, interviews, focus groups, school records, and student surveys (Hamedani et al., 2015). Data collected from the three schools were then compared against data from a national sample.

The students in Hamedani's et al. (2015) study described more positive school environments, stronger relationships with teachers, increased school engagement, and more social and emotional support than did students in the national sample. Students at the study site schools also demonstrated growth mindsets, resiliency, efficaciousness, and more ambitious goals than those in the national sample. The researchers explained,

> Taken together, student survey results revealed that students in the social emotional learning schools we studied reported more positive educational experiences; felt more connected to their schools; demonstrated higher levels of psychological and emotional support, engagement, and empowerment; and were more socially engaged than students in the comparison schools sample. (Hamedani et al., 2015, p. 112)

Thus, Hamedani's et al. research indicated high schools that implement SEL programs may better provide students with supports and resources needed to help them recognize the value of education, feel a sense of belonging, and believe in their abilities to excel academically.

In terms of school climate, Hamedani et al. (2015) reported SEL was foundational and reflected in each school's mission, vision, norms, values, and expectations of student conduct. The school environments were characterized by respect and strong relationships. Educators emphasized the importance of meeting students' social, emotional, and psychological needs just as much as students' academic needs. Setting clear norms regarding students' self-management, social awareness, relationships, and decision-making skills fostered safe climates (Hamedani et al., 2015).

Hamedani et al. (2015) also explored the daily practices of each school and found SEL curriculum and instructional strategies were integrated through processes (*how* students learned the content) and content (*what* students learned). Student collaboration on academic projects also fostered social engagement. Disciplinary action was handled in ways that nurtured responsibility while preserving relationships and protecting students' dignity. Such practices relied on students' sense of responsibility to themselves and others. Finally, school traditions, clubs, and activities were designed to honor students, provide them with agency, and foster a sense of community. Hamedani et al. concluded that integrating SEL into high school education was most effective when strategies were informed by research and practiced throughout the school. Further, practices should address students' unique needs and be grounded in direct instruction.

Sociocultural Differences

When considering the potential benefits of SEL for low SES students, it is important to understand that a *one-size-fits-all* approach may not be effective. Some SEL programs are effective for some students, while others are not (Garner et al., 2014). This

is because students' values, communities, families, and peer groups influence SEC—and thus, may manifest in culturally specific ways (Garner et al., 2014). Such factors may include race, gender, SES, disability status, and geographic location (Garner et al., 2014). Although SEC usually develops in tandem with environmental aspects of one's community, these factors do not always align. For example, child-adult interactions in middle class and poor communities may vary (Garner et al., 2014; Lareau, 2011). Thus, students' SEC should be explored considering sociocultural demands and expectations (Graves & Howes, 2011).

Although several researchers have investigated the benefits of SEL programs for underprivileged, minority, and at-risk students (Gunter, Caldarella, Korth, & Young, 2012; Jones et al., 2011), little is known about the appropriateness of these interventions for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Castro-Olivo, 2014). Culturally and linguistically diverse students are less likely than Caucasian students to experience a sense of belonging and are more likely to experience social and emotional issues (Castro-Olivo, 2014).

To explore the effect of culturally adapted versions of an SEL program, Castro-Olivo (2014) conducted a study of 102 Latin adolescent students enrolled in intermediate English language classes at seven schools in Southern California. The average age of participants was 13.91; 75% of participants were enrolled in middle school and the remainder were high school students. The intervention group of students participated in a cultural adaptation of the Strong Teens program (Merrell, Carrizales, Feuerborn, Gueldener, & Tran, 2007), called *Jóvenes Fuertes*. Castro-Olivo and Merrell (2012)

adapted the Jóvenes Fuertes program for Latin American high school students. Prior to the study, participating students completed pre-intervention assessments. At the program's conclusion, post-intervention assessments were conducted. These assessments included Behavior Emotional Rating Scale (BERS-2), a Spanish translation of the Strong Teens Knowledge Test, and a researcher-created assessment of students' satisfaction with the program. Results of repeated-measure ANOVAs indicated students in the intervention group had higher levels of social-emotional resilience and SEL knowledge than did students in the control group (Castro-Olivo, 2014). In addition, Jóvenes Fuertes participants felt the program was valuable and relevant to their abilities to improve academically. Findings from Castro-Olivo study indicated that existing SEL programs may be culturally adapted to improve SEC among diverse students.

Common Core State Standards

In terms of academic achievement, students need certain SEL skills to become experts in content of the CCSS. Known as the "four C's," the following skills are integral to academic and career success in the 21st century: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity (Beers, 2011). According to the National Research Council (2012), the CCSS highlight students' needs to possess social and emotional competencies, such as effective communication and collaboration skills, to become college and career-ready.

To prepare for college or career success, students must be able to collaborate and embrace diversity; however, as Elias (2014) pointed out, the social and emotional skills required for this success are often neglected in the implementation of the CCSS.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development(ASCD) research indicates that students must possess a variety of nonacademic skills to master the academic content of the CCSS, including: (a) the ability to clearly and respectfully support their arguments and challenge others; (b) the ability to apply strategic thinking; (c) the possession of a mindset that supports perseverance to overcome challenges; (d) an orientation toward autonomous learning; and (e) social and emotional competencies (ASCD, 2012). Thus, the need for effective SEL programs has grown as states transitions to the CCSS (Elias, 2014).

SEL Research Focuses and Elementary Students

Although a significant body of research supports the need for school-based SEL programs, most of the existing SEL research focuses on elementary and middle school students. High school students are rarely the subjects of SEL research because teachers typically emphasize the development of these skills in earlier grades (Hamedani et al., 2015). Consequently, researchers know significantly less about effective SEL practices in secondary grades. For example, in a 2011 meta-analysis of 213 SEL programs conducted by Durlak et al., (2011) only 13% of studies in the analysis involved high school students.

The lack of focus on SEL in high school may be because of the strong emphasis placed on cognitive development and measurable academic performance outcomes. As a result, secondary education often fails to consider all of students' developmental needs, holistically (Hamedani et al., 2015). Further, Hamedani et al. (2015) suggested that SEL programs are more often implemented in primary and middle schools because of school structures and emphasis on helping students understand how to be responsible members

of a community, to manage their emotions, and cooperate with others. The structure of high school is more departmentalized, and teachers' jobs are often oriented toward imparting students with content area knowledge and skills. Educators may "believe older students should have figured out how to comport themselves and take care of their own needs by the time they enter high school, despite evidence to the contrary" (Hamedani et al., 2015, p. 8). Because of the lack of SEL research on high school students, many questions remain regarding what social and emotional learning looks like in secondary grades and how to address these student needs (Farrington et al., 2012; Humphrey, 2013).

Despite the lack of research on secondary SEL programs, researchers have established guidelines for effective SEL programs across all grade levels. For example, Dusenbury, Newman et al. (2014) conducted a comprehensive analysis of SEL programs in each state to explore the components of highly effective programs. The following list, as reported by Dusenbury, Weissberg, Goren, and Domitrovich (2014), represented elements of effective SEL programs developed from that research. According to the researchers, the common aspects of highly effective SEL programs include,

- Freestanding standards that provide clear statements and benchmarks for what students should know and be capable of in terms of their self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship and decision-making skills;
- Integration with standards from core subject areas;
- Guidance to help teachers support students' SEC through pedagogical practices;

- Guidance on how to create positive learning environments that are critical to the development of SEC;
- Guidance to help teachers develop lessons that are culturally sensitive a linguistically appropriate; and
- Resources to help teachers implement high quality programs, such as assessment and professional development (Dusenbury, Weissberg et al., 2014)

Some forms of SEL standards have been implemented in three states in this country, including Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Kansas. Many K–12 schools have SEL standards integrated with other standards, such as the CCSS; however, such integration often results in disjointed SEL standards that lack comprehensiveness. In addition, Dusenbury, Weissberg, et al. (2014) reported standards are not systematically established through all grade levels. Thus, SEL standards should be developed apart from other standards and should be marked by developmental standards for each grade level (Dusenbury, Weissberg et al., 2014).

Effective SEL programs also have the potential to assist teachers with classroom management. Although classroom management is often thought of as a teacher's ability to control students' behaviors, it really is about helping students learn self-management skills, so they can control their own behaviors (Jones, Bailey, & Jacob, 2014). Student SEC includes the abilities to listen, focus, follow directions, manage emotions, resolve conflicts, and cooperate with others (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Each of these abilities reflects basic SECs, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

According to Jones et al. (2014), although classroom management strategies may vary across grade levels, four principles are appropriate to all levels. The researchers suggested that effective classroom management (a) is based on teacher planning and lesson preparation, (b) is an extension of quality classroom relationships, (c) is embedded in the environment, and (e) includes ongoing documentation and observations. These principles are proactive rather than reactive in that they teach students to manage their own behaviors.

SEL Programs

As discussed previously, far fewer SEL programs exist for high school students than for elementary and middle school students. However, the CASEL's 2015 guide to SEL programs identified five high-quality programs, based on the framework for well-designed and evidence-based programs. These programs include Project Based Learning, Consistency Management & Cooperative Discipline, Facing History and Ourselves, Reading Apprenticeship, and Student Success Skills. These programs may provide valuable tools to help high school teachers better understand SEL and strategies for implementing it into classroom curricula. The following section includes a discussion on each of these programs.

Project Based Learning

Finkelstein, Hanson, Huang, Hirschman, and Huang (2010) evaluated the effects of the Project Based Learning (PBL) program, developed by the Buck Institute for Education, on student learning and problem solving. Project-based learning encourages students to be active participants in their educations and is a common component of high

school reform models (Finkelstein et al., 2010). The study sample included 7,000 12th-grade students enrolled at 66 high schools in Arizona and California. The teachers of these students (n = 76) were divided into groups. The intervention group attended a 40-hour, 5-day course in the PBL curriculum, while the control group participated in regular professional development.

Finkelstein et al. (2010) explored the effects that the PBL program had on students' content knowledge and problem-solving skills, and teachers' content knowledge, instructional practices, and satisfaction with teaching materials and methods. Data analysis revealed students in the intervention group (that is, those whose teachers participated in the PBL training) scored higher on content knowledge and problem-solving skills than did those in the control group. Among the teachers, no significant differences in content knowledge and pedagogical style were detected between the intervention and control groups; however, teachers in the intervention group did report significantly higher levels of satisfaction with the teaching materials and methods of the PBL program than did those in the control group, who utilized traditional approaches.

Consistency Management & Cooperative Discipline

Consistency Management & Cooperative Discipline is a prosocial classroom instruction and management program. The program aims to improve student achievement by emphasizing the prevention of disciplinary problems, making improvements to student behavior and school climate, and practicing time management. In U.S. schools, the program is often used in urban, prevalent poverty areas, and can be implemented across primary and secondary grade levels (Freiberg, Huzinec, & Templeton, 2009).

Researchers have found Consistency Management & Cooperative Discipline may improve teacher and student attendance rates, reduce students' behavior problems, increase students' reading and mathematics achievement, and improve school climates and classroom environments (Freiberg et al., 2009). In a study by Freiberg et al. (2009), Consistency Management & Cooperative Discipline resulted in improved academic performance, but no significant reductions in behavioral problems were evident.

Facing History and Ourselves

Facing History and Ourselves (2012) is a nonprofit organization designed to help teachers engage diverse students in historical examinations of racism, anti-Semitism, and prejudice to promote "more humane and informed citizenry" (Barr, Boulay, Selman, McCormick, Lowenstein, Gamse, & Leonard, 2015, p. 4). The organization provides educators with a teaching model that helps students understand correlations between social history, behavioral norms, and civic and moral decisions they may encounter in their lives. Facing History and Ourselves approaches professional development by helping teachers understand how to integrate three elements into their lessons, including (a) teaching students how to reflect on social and ethical issues, and enhance civic and critical thinking skills; (b) using student-centered learning to improve classroom environments, promote discussion, and increase students' engagement; and (c) examining violence and social breakdown in history to provide students with examples of historical efforts to strengthen and restore civil society during unrest.

Facing History and Ourselves utilizes instructional methods that nurture social and emotional development, including reflection, cooperation, discussion, deliberation,

and interaction (Barr et al., 2015). As Barr et al. (2015) explained, "This approach contrasts with humanities courses that emphasize teaching information based on facts and de-emphasize drawing connections between the past and the present, or the past and one's own life" (p. 6). Educators are provided with professional development (typically 5 days long) that teaches them to engage with content, resources, and practice methods for classroom application (Barr et al., 2015).

Barr et al. (2015) conducted a study of Facing History and Ourselves among a group of 1,371 ninth and 10th grade students attending 60 high schools throughout the United States. Teachers of students in the intervention group were provided with a 5-day professional development workshop on the program, which included lesson materials, instruction in student-centered pedagogy, and follow-up coaching. Analysis indicated students in the intervention group experienced significantly higher levels of civic efficacy, tolerance for those with opposing views, and positive perceptions of classroom climates (Barr et al., 2015). Specifically, classroom environments of the intervention group were more open, facilitated higher levels of civic discourse, and fostered increased student self-efficacy. The researchers concluded,

> an educational approach for adolescents that integrates intellectual rigor, engaged academic discussion, and ethical reflection processes for learning history—and then connecting that history to one's current social and civic concerns, commitments, and participation – is effective in fostering fundamental historical thinking skills that students can apply to understanding new content (Barr et al., 2015, p. 35).

Reading Apprenticeship

Reading Apprenticeship is a literacy program aimed at adolescent reading skill development within specific disciplines. As Greenleaf et al. (2011) explained, the program involves common instructional techniques in vocabulary and comprehension aimed at increasing students' motivation and engagement with academic content. The model is founded on research that indicates students possess complex thinking skills and can conduct academic inquiry, but they lack the skills or confidence to effectively engage in such tasks. Conversations, class discussions, and small group work help students develop literacy skills in content areas. These methods provide students with opportunities to understand content, practice comprehension, respond to content, and discuss reading and problem-solving strategies (Greenleaf et al., 2011). The program has components that encourage positive behaviors, which can improve attendance rates and reduce discipline problems (Somers et al., 2010). In Somers et al.'s (2010) study on the effects of the Reading Apprenticeship program, the researchers found that students who participated in the program experienced increased academic performance and a reduction in behavioral problems. Greenleaf et al. did not find reduced behavioral problems, but students did demonstrate improved academic outcomes.

Student Success Skills

Student Success Skills (SSS; Brigman & Webb, 2010) is an SEL program based on the following three skillsets, (a) cognitive and meta-cognitive skills; (b) social skills, including teamwork and problem-solving; and (c) self-management in areas such as motivation, anger, and attention. Many researchers have reported that these three skill

areas are critical to school success (Durlak et al., 2011; Yeager & Walton, 2011). The development of these skills has also proven to be a significant factor in the prevention of academic failure among at-risk students (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollack, 2001; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). The program is designed to provide school counselors and teachers with evidence-based programs to help students improve prosocial behaviors and academic achievement (Villares, Frain, Brigman, Webb, & Peluso, 2012). The premise of the SSS program is that students need a foundational set of cognitive, social, and self-management skills to succeed in school, and that these skills can all be taught. As Mariani, Villares, Wirth, and Brigman (2014) explained, students' confidence increases when they are given opportunities to practice skills in caring and supportive environments. The program is based in humanistic philosophy (Villares, Lemberger, Brigman, & Webb, 2011) and informed by a change theory, which postulates that students can achieve positive academic outcomes when they are taught cognitive, social, and self-management skills by trained practitioners (Lemberger, Selig, Bowers, & Rogers, 2015).

The SSS program also addresses the three domains outlined in the American School Counseling Association National Standards (2004). The program does this by (a) helping students develop the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that nurture academic learning through activities conducted in caring and supportive environments and which encourage the development of memory and anxiety skill management; (b) helping students acquire the attitudes develop the knowledge and skills to make decisions, set goals, and achieve their goals through progress monitoring; and (c) helping students

employ strategies to obtain future career success through goal setting, positive attitudes, decision-making, and the development of caring communities (Villares et al., 2012).

The SSS program can be incorporated in Grades K–12 through a variety of appropriate structures for different grade levels, including: (a) Ready to Learn (Brigman, Lane, & Lane, 2008) for students in Grades K–1; (b) Ready for Success (Brigman & Webb, 2007) for students in Grades 2 and 3; and (c) SSS (Brigman, Campbell, & Webb, 2010) for students in Grades 4 through 12. A parenting component, Parent Success Skills (Brigman & Peluso, 2009), is also available to reinforce the student components of the classroom programs. In classrooms, SSS is taught as five 45-minute lessons, 1 week apart. Each lesson is structured and outlined in the SSS teacher manual. Twenty strategies help students improve cognitive, social, and self-management skills. The key skills taught in the SSS program include (a) goal setting, progress monitoring, success sharing; (b) creating caring and supportive classroom environments; (c) cognitive skill development; (d) test anxiety and performance; and (e) building optimism (Mariani et al., 2014).

Summary and Conclusions

The dearth of social and emotional learning in high school curriculum is because of the shift in focus to cognitive development, academic achievement, and high-stakes testing that occurs in secondary grades (Humphrey, 2013). This emphasis on academic development and achievement is fueled by the influences of EI and outcomes-based frameworks used in public policy, which underscore the development of skills considered economically valuable in a capitalist economy (Allais, 2012; Croft et al., 2016). Although social and emotional competencies are not considered skills with measurable outputs that

can be used to accumulate wealth, policymakers must understand that SEL can have a significant, positive influence on the acquisition of skills and knowledge that *are* emphasized in current outcomes-based frameworks. That is, to maximize students' academic achievement in the core subjects emphasized by current public policies, students' SEC must also be fostered.

Studies reviewed in this chapter indicate SEL strategies can improve academic success among secondary students (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Elias & Haynes, 2008; Hamedani et al., 2015). However, additional research is needed to understand what teachers know about SEL and if, and if, so how they integrate it into their classroom curriculum. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of the following five social and emotional competencies: (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, (c) social awareness, (d) relationship skills, and (e) responsible decision-making skills. Specifically, I investigated what secondary teachers in Title 1 schools understood about these competencies and how they integrated them into the classroom curriculum. Information gleaned from this study may provide public stakeholders, such as policymakers, education administrators, teachers, and parents, with an understanding of how teachers' SEL knowledge and classroom strategies may be improved to maximize students' overall behaviors and academic success.

In this chapter, I provided a comprehensive discussion of relevant research on public policy in public education, SEL, and adolescence. The studies discussed in this review indicated SEL may benefit adolescent learners in multiple ways, including

fostering improvements in academic, social, and behavioral skills. In the following chapter, I provide details regarding the study's' methodology for addressing this gap. Results from this investigation help promote positive social change by helping to fill gaps in the literature and encourage change in future public policies in education reforms.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

SEL, which applies to an individual's ability to acquire the skills needed to manage emotions, set goals, show concern for others, maintain healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions (Payton et al., 2008), is based on five tenets: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making abilities. Although SEL is rarely emphasized in education beyond the elementary years (Humphrey, 2013), there are many benefits, including improvements to academic success and a reduction of problem behaviors (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Durlak et al., 2011; Humphrey, 2013). Because there is some social emotional language in the CCSS, SEL has become a topic of interest among stakeholders and researchers (Stewart & Comallie-Caplan, 2015).

Like many other areas of U.S. public policy, education has become colonized by EI (Ball, 2007; Lundahl, 2012). Considering the influence of EI on public policy, the emphasis on education has shifted almost entirely to the promotion of individuals' abilities to compete economically and accumulate wealth (Lundahl, 2012). Although social and emotional skills are largely ignored in U.S. public policy and public school curricula, research indicates that such competencies have a significant and positive influence on students' academic achievement (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Durlak et al., 2011).

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of CASEL's five social and

emotional competencies: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills. Specifically, I investigated what secondary teachers in Title 1 schools understand about these competencies and if and how they integrate them into the classroom curriculum.

In this chapter, I detail the methodology. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research design, rationale, and role of the researcher. I then provide details regarding the population, sample, recruitment, instrumentation, and data collection. The chapter also includes an outline of the data analysis plan and issues of trustworthiness. Finally, I discuss the ethical procedures I employed to protect all participants.

Research Design and Rationale

The following research question and subquestions guided this study.

RQ1: Among teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how are policies related to SEL competencies for students understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

SQ1: Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' self-awareness understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

SQ2 Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' self-management understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

SQ3: Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' social awareness understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

SQ4: Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' relationship skills understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

SQ5: Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' decision-making skills understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

I employed a qualitative research design for the study. The three basic research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative studies provide rich, detailed data that allow researchers to explore phenomena holistically (Tracy, 2013). According to Merriam (2009), qualitative methods are advantageous for exploring how people interpret life experiences, construct their worlds, and make meaning from those experiences. Quantitative methods are used to statistically examine predetermined variables. Mixed methods studies include both qualitative and quantitative components. Because the goal of the research was to conduct an in-depth and inductive exploration of teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of five social and emotional competencies.

Other designs were considered for this study, including case study, ethnography, and grounded theory. Case studies are often employed to explore *how* and *why* phenomena occur (Yin, 2014). Case study samples are usually bounded. The strength of

this design is that it allows researchers to use multiple data sources to develop richer understandings of phenomena (Yin, 2014). Because the research pertained to participants' knowledge and experiences using only one form of data, a case study design was not appropriate.

Ethnography is a type of qualitative investigation that requires researchers to make direct contact with participants in their natural settings. This type of research is helpful for understanding the behaviors and experiences of members of a group. However, ethnography involves the collection of data using multiple methods and sources and is more concerned with the roles of culture and other micro and macro factors. Because participants' ethnicity or social backgrounds were not central to this research, I did not select ethnography.

I also considered grounded theory, which involves the creation of theory based on information grounded in study data. Data analysis for grounded theory is iterative and occurs in rounds that change, and progress is based on information uncovered in previous rounds (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). The aim of grounded theory investigations is to develop a theory. Because the goal of this research was to explore teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of five social and emotional competencies, not to generate theory, I did not select grounded theory.

I chose a phenomenological method for this study because my aim was to examine participants' lived experiences and perceptions related to a specific phenomenon. According to Tracy (2013), phenomenology allows researchers to explore lived experiences regarding a phenomenon while gathering data to develop relevant

themes and subthemes. In the study, the phenomenon of interest was teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of the five social and emotional competencies.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies, the researcher functions as the study instrument because all study data flows through the researcher (Tracy, 2013). In the study, my role was to design the study, conduct interviews, analyze study data, and present the results. I hired a professional transcriptionist to perform interview transcription. Use of a transcribing service requires a confidentiality agreement. During the stages of data collection and ongoing data analysis, I set aside personal biases and preconceived notions to prevent data from being influenced by my thoughts and feelings. I isolated my individual opinions and biases by maintaining epoché and bracketing. Bracketing and epoché required me to become aware of and suspend my personal beliefs and opinions to get a clear and unbiased understanding of teachers' experiences. According to Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013):

> Bracketing is a methodological device of phenomenological inquiry that requires deliberately putting aside one's own belief about the phenomenon under investigation or what one already knows about the subject prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation. (p. 1)

Before each interview or transcript analysis, I took a moment to consciously set aside my personal beliefs, values, knowledge, and experiences to prevent my personal thoughts and opinions from coloring research data. I maintained a reflexive journal throughout all

stages of data collection and analysis to note my personal thoughts and feelings to separate them from study data.

My personal professional background includes 24 years in the juvenile justice and clinical social work fields. During my work as a clinical therapist and casework specialist, I observed the struggles that low SES youth contend with, firsthand. Many of the youth and children I worked with struggled with severe deficits in their social and emotional skills, which compounded other challenges in their lives. During the course of my career, it became clear that the lack of social and emotional skills was a common denominator for many troubled youths.

This realization sparked my personal passion for reform in public policy and to address social and emotional learning in secondary education. Public policy reform via political action and advocacy is a key aspect of being a professional in social work. So imperative is this mission, that in California, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-CA) annually holds Legislative Lobby Days in Sacramento, the states' capitol. Another example of the commitment of the social work profession to public policy in this nation is the Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy's, Social Work Day on the Hill, held in Washington D.C.

I have never worked directly in education and none of my study participants were individuals with whom I have past or current personal or professional relationships. Thus, there were no risks of conflicts of interest or coercion of any kind. A $10.00 Starbucks gift card was Institution Review Board (IRB) approved and given to each teacher participant as an incentive for their participation. Even so, there was no need to address

any potential ethical conflicts concerning this reasonable incentive. My rationale was that teachers volunteered their delegated worktime to participate in interviews. Later in this chapter, I detail the ethical procedures for this study.

Methodology

Participant Selection

Qualitative research usually employs nonprobability sampling because statistically representative samples are not required. Therefore, I utilized a purposeful sample of teachers of all subjects and levels at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations. Purposeful sampling is helpful when researchers seek participants with specific characteristics or experiences. Because I intended to gather data from individuals who have experience teaching low SES high school students (Title 1), I chose a purposeful sampling strategy as the main strategy. The main disadvantage of purposeful sampling is that data collected from the sample cannot be generalized (Patton, 2002); however, because generalizability was not an aim of qualitative research, this limitation was accepted.

One school had a rigorous application process for conducting research in its schools. After the overseeing department approved me to conduct my research I was afforded an opportunity to solicit teachers with a 5-minute presentation during their monthly staff meeting, each teacher received my contact information. One school administrator only allowed telephone interviewing of teachers and provided information of two teachers to start the snowball sampling strategy. Other school staff also agreed to disseminate the study information via emails to teachers; these teachers forwarded

invitation emails to their colleagues through a snowball sampling process. Snowball sampling in qualitative research happens when participant members recruit additional participants from within their circle of colleagues (Tracy, 2013).

The population included high school teachers employed by Title 1 high schools in southern California. I selected the study site because they are ample sized schools in California (California Department of Education, 2016). Prior to the study, I gained permission to interview teachers at the selected schools by contacting school administrators and teachers' union administrators via email and phone calls. I provided school research administrators with a detailed explanation of (a) the aim of the study, (b) the potential benefits to students and teachers, (c) the time requirements for teacher interviews, and (d) sample interview questions. I obtained permission from school administrators and I complied with any Institution Review Board and Research Review department requirements for the individual schools when requested.

I set out to interview 8 to 15 participants, a total of 17 teachers met participation criteria. The total resulting sample size for individual interviews was 10 teachers, this is the number of interviews at which point saturation was achieved, with one teacher withdrawing during the interview due to their time constraints. In qualitative research, sample size is based on saturation, which refers to the point at which the addition of new participants during the data gathering process does not generate any new themes (Tracy, 2013). Many suggestions are available to guide the determination of sample sizes in qualitative studies. For example, Tracy (2013) recommended a sample of five to eight participants. Francis et al. (2010) recommended 10 to 13 participants for

phenomenological studies. Morse (1994) suggested a minimum sample size of six. Based on these recommendations, I selected a sample size of 8 to 15 participants. In this study, I conducted continuous data analysis until the point of saturation was achieved (n = 10). Given the relative homogeneity of the sample size and the fact that many teachers were not familiar with SEL concepts as outlined by CASEL, reaching saturation of the data early in this study was not surprising.

To be eligible to participate in the study, individuals had to meet the following inclusion criteria (a) be a current, permanent teacher at the study site school; and (b) have at least 2 years of experience as a high school teacher. I obtained the access to prospective participants from school administrators. Next, I recruited participants via school-site staff meetings, where I made a 5-minute presentation of the study. Additionally, I posted recruitment flyers in the teachers' lounge on campus. One administrator referred this researcher to teachers via email and provided contact information and authorized telephone interviews. These teachers disseminated the invitation to any colleagues they felt would be interested. This resulted in snowball sampling, which is a form of word-of-mouth recruitment by other teachers at the school site. The recruitment period ended after 17 participants were acquired, which took eight days.

Instrumentation

I collected study data via semistructured open-ended interviews, which allowed me to uncover details of participants' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of the five social and emotional competencies. I asked follow-up

interview questions with probing questions to draw out details regarding participants' thoughts and opinions. Prior to data collection, a panel from the dissertation committee reviewed the proposed interview protocol to assess its face validity.

The use of open-ended questions improves data credibility, ease of data analysis, and reduces researcher bias (Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenological research, the researcher serves as the instrument through which data flows (Tracy, 2013). Consequently, to maintain the integrity of the data collected, it is essential that the researcher is aware of his or her own biases and thoughts, to prevent subjective opinions and experiences from affecting the data analysis. To do this, I employed bracketing, which involves the awareness and suspension of my individual opinions and biases (Moustakas, 1994).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Study participants included 10 teachers of all subjects and grade levels at Title 1 public high schools in southern California schools with a racially diverse student population. For this phenomenological investigation, participants were identified through a combination of purposeful criterion sampling through which I made a presentation at a staff meeting to acquaint them with my study. I also obtained some teachers who met the criteria through snowball sampling methods, where teachers shared this opportunity to participate with other teachers. To be eligible to participate in the study, individuals had to meet the following inclusion criteria: be a current, permanent teacher at one of the study site schools, and have at least 2 years of high school teaching experience.

I received an invitation to attend an administrative meeting at one of the high school's campus to solicit teacher participants. I gave a 5-minute presentation to these perspective participants. The other school's teachers' association president provided the contact information of teachers, these teachers, in turn sent invitations to their colleagues, including school psychologists and other administrators, who in turn invited additional teachers to participate. I determined the eligibility of all individuals upon initial contact. All face to face interviews with teachers provided privacy and safety, as they took place on campus in the participants' classrooms during planning periods, as mutually agreed upon. Cases where interviews were completed through phone contact, I ensured their interview area selected was quiet, private and free from disturbances or interruptions.

The interview provided participants with sufficient time to respond to all questions. Prior to interviews, I reviewed the following with each participant, (a) anticipated interview length; (b) confidentiality procedures; (c) confirmation of informed consent; (d) the interviewee's right to know how information would be shared; and (e) that the researcher would adhere to the duty to report, which limited specific arrears of confidentiality; and (f) participants' right to stop the interview at any time with no repercussions. Moreover, an explanation of why the research was pertinent and how it may personally benefit the interviewee and the public was discussed. Before the interviews began, each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form. The informed consent includes information regarding the study, my contact information, and information on how to contact Walden University Office of Research Ethics and Compliance. In addition, the form explained that participants' identities would be

protected, that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and that all interviews would be audio-recorded.

For each interview, I followed the prescribed interview protocol found in Appendix B. All interviews were audio-recorded for later transcription. After the conclusion of each interview, I thanked participants and assured them of the value and importance of their contributions to the study, as recommended by Janesick (2011). One public school requested that teachers be interviewed by telephone. However, where permissible by school administrators, and after transcribing recorded interviews, I sent a copy of each transcript to the corresponding participant to allow them to check for accuracy of the data. This process, known as member checking, helped to ensure the accuracy and validity of the data transcribed from each interview (Harper & Cole, 2012). I coded data using a continuous iterative process; Interview 1 (Z1) was transcribed and coded, followed by Interview 2 (Z2) being transcribed and coded, and this process continued until all interviewing, transcribing, and coding was complete, with emerging codes accounted for and noted. I hired an outside service to transcribe recorded interviews. After which, I reviewed the transcripts while listening to the recordings.

I have stored all study-related data in a locked file cabinet and on my personal password-protected portable external hard disk and flash drive, where it will remain for a period of 5 years, after which all data will be erased, shredded and/or destroyed by a specializing professional company, where reasonable. All data were available to my committee, and Institution Review Board (IRB), if requested. A professional transcriptionist signed a confidentiality form and transcribed each interview to allow for

textual analysis. Audio recordings provided to transcriptionist were free of any identifying information. Instead, I identified each participant by an alpha-numeric code. A Starbucks gift card in the amount of $10.00 was compensation provided to teachers for their participation. To withdraw, participants were asked to provide me with a written declaration of their intent to withdraw. There was one participant who stated that they did not have enough time to complete the interview and they withdrew.

Data Analysis Plan

I used a phenomenological approach to ongoing data analysis, seeking saturation of the data, as suggested Hycner (1999) and Moustakas (1994). To begin, I manually read each interview transcript to gain a basic idea of what each participant reported. Then, I re-read the transcripts while searching for emerging themes and concepts. This process involved open coding, which describes the process of breaking down, comparing, examining, conceptualizing, and categorizing data, line-by-line, in order to produce preliminary codes (Moustakas, 1999). Preliminary coding reflects research questions, with concepts that underlie my study. The coding framework also included coding for each of the SEL tenets. Each interview question provided data for each of the preliminary codes. During open coding, interview data were isolated into specific words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to explore the relationships between parts of the interviews. Codes were then labeled to assign meanings. The frequencies of these units of analysis were noted and organized in a spreadsheet.

Next, I employed axial coding, which describes the stage when the researcher places data back together after open coding is complete (Hycner, 1999; Moustakas,

1994). Axial coding involves exploring events and incidents that lead to the experiences of a phenomenon. Data organization and management were simplified through use of NVivo 11. More efficient than hand coding, computer software can help reveal themes and categories in the data, while controlling for bias. Data analysis software helps researchers manage substantial amounts of text data (Patton, 2002). Like rigorous hand coding, a researcher is able to arrange and analyze data in a way that leads to a complete analysis and understanding of the data. Patton (2002) asserted, "qualitative software programs are able to store data, perform coding, retrieval functions, comparing, and perform data linking;" however, it is only a tool and "humans do the analyzing" (p. 442).

Finally, I conducted selective coding, which describes the stage at which the narrative surrounding the phenomenon is created, based on the themes and categories that emerged during open and axial coding (Moustakas, 1994). Selective or focused coding, typically used in grounded theory research, involves the core category, which is the central phenomenon around which all other categories are organized. During selective coding, I related the core category to other categories, defining the relationships between categories and adding or refining other categories that require further development.
An analytical framework is a set of codes organized into categories by the researcher that serve the purpose of making a new foundation for the data, thus creating smaller, although richer, data that will verify soundness in my research answers (Hycner, 1999; Moustakas, 1994). Each of the research questions was devised to provide rich data to answer the research questions, subquestions, and concepts, and to help formulate preliminary coding. The preliminary framework for my data management and analysis

aided in assuring that my research questions lined-up with my data analysis. I completed the open coding process by creating a node in NVivo 11, for each interview question. Each interview question corresponded to a research subquestion or provided background information and context for the topic. Therefore, participants' responses to the same interview questions and, thus, the same research questions, were placed within the same node for easy management and grouping. I used key competencies identified by the CASEL (see Table 1) as my identifying coding labels to further connect the data to my research questions. In addition, I provided a frequency table of all codes to demonstrate my decisions about what makes analytic sense for this study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The validity and reliability of the data are ensured through the creation of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability throughout the data collection and analysis process (Elo et al., 2014). To ensure the trustworthiness of data, it is important that participants' actual perceptions and experiences are reflected as accurately as possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To increase credibility, I was mindful of how my behaviors could influence participants. To prevent my personal bias from interfering with data collection, I bracketed my firsthand experiences (Moustakas, 1994). To achieve bracketing, I followed the following steps, as recommended by Chan et al. (2013):

1. Begin with a mentality assessment of my own personality.
2. Practice reflexivity through a reflexive journal.

3. Create a thorough data collection and analysis plan before data collection begins.
4. Utilize open-ended interview questions.
5. Maintain curiosity about participants.
6. Generate knowledge from participants, via interviews.

To ensure *credibility*, which describes the accurate reflection of participants' experiences in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I employed member checking. The process of member checking allows participants to review the researcher's preliminary analysis to ensure the researcher accurately interpreted the participants' experiences. In addition, member checking empowers participants as co-researchers by involving them in the research process. Although *transferability*, which describes the generalizability of findings (Merriam, 2009), is not the aim of qualitative research, I increased it through thick description. Thick description provided a rich context for understanding study findings. To ensure the study is replicable, also known as the study's *dependability* (Shenton, 2004), I kept detailed documentation of all steps of data collection and analysis. This audit trail included documentation of any deviations from the procedures established in this chapter. Finally, conformability is ensured through the occurrence of credibility, transferability, and dependability, as previous described (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

Ethical Procedures

Prior to any data collection, I obtained approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB # 06-14-17-0136111). To ensure that all participants

were treated in a fair and ethical manner, I followed all basic ethical principles outlined in *The Belmont Report* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979), which include respect for participants, justice, and beneficence. When collecting data, my primary concern was the concept of beneficence, which ensures participants' wellbeing is held to the highest standard (Owonikoko, 2013). To ensure participant beneficence, I follow a research design that minimized risks to participants. It was not expected that teacher participants would experience perils or memories of anger, empathy, or other injurious feelings from past experiences while discussing social and emotional learning during the interview, should this occur interview would be concluded immediately. I followed *The Belmont Report* principles in addition to those set forth by Walden University to maximize the study's utility while minimizing threats to participants. Participants' identities were protected by alpha-numeric code names during data analysis and presentation. In addition, I did not use identifying information in study presentations or dissertation publication. Finally, participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point during data collection and analysis.

Data collection procedures were designed with the safety of participants as a primary concern. I ensured participant autonomy through the informed consent process, during which I described the purpose of the research and provided my contact information. I reviewed the content of the informed consent form prior to obtaining participants' signatures. In addition, I reviewed the risks, benefits, confidentiality procedures, and study objectives with participants. I also discussed my role as the researcher and my duty to report child or elder abuse, suicidal or homicidal ideations, or

criminal activities if disclosed to me during data collection. It was not anticipated that the interview questions would reveal such information; even so, this disclosure would have been warranted. Prior to any data collection, participants had the opportunity to ask study-related questions. Before interviews began, participants were required to sign the informed consent form. Any participant who refused was thanked for his or her time and exited from the study. Participation in the study was voluntary, and all participants had the opportunity to withdraw at any point. Because I have no personal or professional connection to the study site or participants, no conflicts of interest were anticipated.

Summary

Social and emotional learning is a powerful tool for improving students' academic and personal success. The aim of the study was to explore teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of five social and emotional competencies: (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, (c) social awareness, (d) relationship skills, and (e) responsible decision-making skills (CASEL, 2015). I collected study data via semistructured interviews, which were audio-recorded. The identities of all participants were protected, and participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection and analysis process. I followed recommendations outlined in *The Belmont Report* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979) in conjunction with those prescribed by Walden University, to ensure ethical compliance and participant protection. After data collection was complete, I engaged in phenomenological analysis, which included qualitative analysis procedures of open, axial, and selective coding.

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the research methodology of the study. This chapter included a discussion of the research design, rationale, and role of the researcher. I also detailed the methodology, including participation selection, instrumentation, participant recruitment, and data analysis. The chapter concluded with issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This qualitative phenomenological study explored teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of the CASEL's five SEL competencies: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills. Participants included a purposive sample of 10 teachers at Title 1 public high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations. Semistructured open-ended interviews were used to collect the data. Study results may contribute to positive social change by revealing gaps in teachers' SEL knowledge that policymakers, education administrators, and teachers can address via policy change and program adoption for applying SEL concepts to public policy reform.

There were five subquestions based on SEL; I directly explored if teachers, by self-report, were implementing any of the following five social and emotional competencies designated by the CASEL: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills. Answers to these research questions provided information that helps fill the gap in literature concerning teachers' knowledge of SEL. By comprehensively recognizing the problem, policymakers, scholars, parents, and other stakeholders can work towards potential solutions.

This chapter presents background information on the setting of the study. I present information regarding the data collection process and thematically discuss the results and emerging themes from the data analysis.

Setting

Study participants were teachers from Title 1 high schools in southern California with racially diverse populations. All interviews took place during the fall 2017 school year. I conducted some interviews with teachers face to face at a secluded location of their choice on their school campus. Some interviews were conducted via telephone, as was requested by that school administrator. For these telephone interviews, the teachers were in a secluded location free from disruptions during the interview. Conducting interviews over the telephone did limit me in terms of not being able to read participants' body language during the interviews or pick up on nonverbal cues which would have led to follow-up questions. There were no conditions that influenced any of the participants during the data collection that would, in turn, influence the interpretation of the results presented in this study.

Data Collection

I interviewed 10 high school teachers (n = 10) to collect data for this research study. Semistructured open-ended interviews were used for all participants to examine their knowledge and classroom implementation of the five competencies of SEL. I conducted face-to-face interviews with teachers from some high schools at a secured location of their choosing on the school campus. I interviewed teachers from other schools via the telephone. During these interviews, participants were in private locations of their choosing and I was in a private location. Participants in face-to-face interviews were provided with consent forms at the time of meeting and allowed to review and consent before the interview. For telephone interviews, consent forms were emailed to

the participants prior to the time of the interview and returned prior to the interview date. I obtained verbal consent after the consent form was reviewed at the beginning of the interviews. The consent form included Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval number for the study (IRB #06-14-17-0136111). Approval expired on June 17, 2018. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission.

I conducted interviews during a 2-week period. After conducting all interviews, I sent the unidentified transcripts to an independent company for transcription. Next, I conducted member checks by sending a copy of each interview transcript to the corresponding participant where permissible. Some schools did not permit me to have contact with teacher participants once the initial interview was completed. Where member checking was allowed, participants checked their statements for accuracy and notified me of any changes. This process helps ensure data accuracy and validity (Harper & Cole, 2012). There were no corrections needed or deviations from the original plans in the data collection process. There were not any unusual or unexpected circumstances to report during the data collection process of this study.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this research study followed the steps suggested by Hycner and Moustakas, using open and axial coding to identify the salient themes that emerged from the interviews. I performed this using NVivo 11, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis program that helps researchers manage and analyze substantial amounts of textual data.

The first step in open and axial coding involves a thorough reading and rereading of each interview transcript to gain an overall picture of what was said in each interview (Hycner, 1999; Moustakas, 1994). As such, I read each transcript thoroughly, while listening to audio recording for familiarity, and then uploaded them into NVivo 11 for further data analysis. Next, I completed the open coding process by creating a node in NVivo 11 for each interview question. Each interview question corresponded to a research subquestion or provided background information and context for the topic. Participants' responses to the same interview and research questions were placed within the same node for easy management and grouping.

After sorting each interview question response into these initial nodes, I examined each significant statement further and assigned a code that specified its meaning. These significant statements included pieces of data, which were either words, phrases, or sentences that communicated a thought related to the research subquestions. During this phase, each of these open codes was contained within the node for its corresponding research question. I followed this procedure for each interview, creating as many codes as needed (see Table 2).

After completing open coding, I initiated axial coding. The goal of axial coding is to identify the relationships between the codes that emerge in the open coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). This is the process of putting data back together in ways that reflect the relationships between the codes and answering the research questions. In axial coding, the researcher examines each open code against the others, and explores the

similarities and differences between these using the constant comparison method (Corbin & Strauss 2014).

Table 2

Significant Statements and Open Codes

Significant Statement	Open Code
"I always start any course that I have…and I've been blessed just because of the nature of the course that I have. We…have programs where we establish what…we kind of take, like a, personality test…and that personality, we take a personality test as well as a…multiple intelligence learning style test."	Students take personality and learning tests
"They have to draw a self-image. We do another project on the computer teaching them how to do graphic design skills but they have to draw a self-portrait and they turn their first name into a acronym and then they have to take positives…vocabulary where there's positive power words that describe themselves."	Students draw self-image and use positive power words
"If we do an essay, we're doing it on a social topic that's current."	Discussions of global topics to build empathy and community

Following the axial coding, I used selective coding to create the core category. The result of this was a hierarchy of themes, subthemes, and codes, each of which is related to the research question. Table 3 presents an example of this coding process. Finally, the themes that emerged through the selective coding process were placed into themes based on their commonalities. Table 4 presents the overall thematic structure of the data by theme, subtheme, and code.

Table 3

Open, Axial, and Selective Coding

Selective Code (Theme)	Selective Code (Subtheme)	Open Code (code)
Five Tenets of SEL	Self-management strategies	Incorporates student input into classroom
		Strategies for goals and habit setting
	Self-awareness strategies	Student reflection strategies
Prior Knowledge of SEL	Beliefs about SEL	Receptive to incorporating SEL

Table 4

Thematic Structure

Theme	Subtheme	Codes
1. Prior Knowledge of SEL	A. Beliefs about SEL	Knowledge of SEL
		Receptive to Incorporating SEL
		Difficulty of Incorporating SEL
		Alignment Between Common Core and SEL
	B. Participation in SEL Training	Workshops, Professional Development, and Training
		Did not Receive Training at Public School
		Saw a Movie about SEL
2. Five Tenets of SEL	A. SEL and Self	Self-Awareness Strategies
		Self-Management Strategies
	B. SEL and Others	Social Awareness Strategies
		Relationship Skills Strategies
	C. SEL and Decisions	Decision-Making Strategies

Evidence of Trustworthiness

There are many established components implemented in the process of completing this study to ensure trustworthiness. One way the validity and reliability are advanced is through the university's IRB review protocols. Additionally, ethical

considerations of human research participants were ensured by the requirement for me to obtain the National Institute of Health Protections' certification.

Internal validity occurred through formulating interview questions that offer participants a variety of opportunities to share experiences and tell their stories. Participants were also able to expound on the data, verify the accuracy of the data they provided, and clarify terms used during the interview. Teachers had the added assurance of confidentiality of their identity and responses, which added to the validity of the research data.

Although the interviews were audio recorded, I also took hand notes and asked additional questions as necessary for added understanding of the data presented by participants. I remained unbiased during the interviews and did not inject opinions or other information that may have influenced the participants' responses. Focus was placed on each participant's personal information as their unique reality.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the assurance of accuracy of participants' experiences reflected in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure credibility, where permitted by school district policy (some schools did not allow for re-contact with participants), I used member checking. Through this process, the research study participants reviewed the interview transcripts and preliminary data analysis to ensure accuracy (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). There was no request for corrections or changes from the participants of this study. The interview transcriptions were true and accurate as presented to the participants. This process also empowers study participants because they are involved in

the research process. Credibility was also established by having the interviews transcribed verbatim by an unbiased, professional transcriptionist, who understands the significance of the task at hand and who has no interest in incorrectly transcribing the interview data. Hiring a professional to perform verbatim transcription also eliminates many of the concerns regarding mistakes and other errors that may arise from misinterpretations. Analyzing the data after transcription, while listening to audio recordings, allowed more accurateness in interpreting the original audio interview. Participants were selected from various campuses, multiple ethnic cultures, various ages groups, and various levels of career experience; this selection decreased potential biases in the data.

Transferability

Transferability was not the aim of this qualitative, phenomenological study. Transferability means that the results of the research study are generalizable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To increase this transferability, I used thick description. This type of description provides a richer, deeper context from which to understand the findings of the study. The population interviewed for this study was only representative of southern California teachers at Title 1 public high schools; therefore, data are not generalizable to other Title 1 public highs schools. Other teachers interviewed in different geographical regions and at a different time may produce different data.

Dependability

When a research study can be replicated, it is said to be dependable (Shenton, 2004). I maintained detailed documentation throughout the entire data collection and

analysis processes. This documentation created an audit trail, which also detailed any deviations from the data collection and analysis procedures, as established in Chapter 3. Having audio interviews dictated verbatim into texts documents assisted me in identifying themes and subthemes in the data. Data obtained in this study may change over time and vary between teachers and schools as variables are ever changing. It is even possible that the same teachers interviewed in the future, may produce different data.

Confirmability

Threats to confirmability of this study were minimized by including the direct quotes of participants from the interview data. These quotes support the themes and subthemes I interpreted. The confirmability of research is also established through following the steps for credibility, transferability, and dependability (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Procedures promote conformability by minimizing bias in that interview questions were standardized among all participants, procedures were duplicated, and the same process was followed throughout, such as audio recording and transcribing each interview, which aids in establishing conformability.

Results

This section presents the results of the data analysis, organized thematically. I designed each interview question to provide either background information for context, or to address a research subquestion. The first four interview questions provided this context, which Theme 1 addresses. The final interview questions relate directly to a research subquestion, which Theme 2 addresses.

Theme 1: Prior Knowledge of SEL

The first theme that emerged from the data related to the knowledge that all the research study participants interviewed possessed little knowledge specifically about SEL. This theme provides background and context for the discussion of the second theme. Theme 1 addressed the following interview questions:

- How much do you know about social-emotional learning?
- How receptive are you to incorporating social and emotional learning into the curriculum?
- Can you describe any past coursework, professional development, or workshops that you have participated in that focused on social and emotional learning?
- Based on your understanding of the Common Core State Standards, how do you think social and emotional learning align with these standards?

Although these questions do not directly address the research question or its subquestions, they provided important context for understanding teachers' perspectives regarding how they incorporate the five tenets of SEL competencies in the classroom.

Contained within this theme were two subthemes: beliefs about social-emotional learning and participation in social-emotional learning training. The subtheme beliefs about social-emotional learning contained four codes: (a) knowledge of social-emotional learning, (b) receptive to incorporating social-emotional learning, (c) difficulty of incorporating social-emotional learning, and (d) alignment between common core and social-emotional learning.

Table 5

Interview Questions 1-4 and Research Questions

Interview Question	Research Question
1. How much do you know about social-emotional learning? 2. How receptive are you to incorporating social and emotional learning into the curriculum? 3. Can you describe any past coursework, professional development, or workshops that you have participated in that focused on social and emotional learning? 4. Based on your understanding of the Common Core State Standards, how do you think social and emotional learning align with these standards?	1. Among teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how are policies related to SEL competencies for students understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

Beliefs about social-emotional learning. The teacher participants described knowing little, being generally aware of, possessing an intermediate knowledge of, and knowing quite a bit about SEL. Four teachers felt that they had quite a bit of knowledge, or an intermediate level of knowledge, about SEL, and three more thought that they possessed at least a general awareness of SEL. These teachers described those components of SEL that they believed they were already including in their classrooms, which at least loosely followed the five tenets of SEL as outlined by the CASEL. The teachers spoke of the trends that they noticed in the last 5–10 years in education that have leaned toward the incorporation of students' social and emotional needs. For example, Participant Z1 said,

> Well, you know, I've been a teacher for a long time and one of the…my goals as a teacher in the classroom is, regardless of when I was an elementary, or middle, or high school teacher, was building a classroom community which included all students…and I realized early on that

> couldn't be done without addressing the social and emotional needs of the students. I have to say that the idea had been the foundation of every practice that I implement, that's at the forefront and it's meeting those students needs first and foremost.

Two participants believed that they had only minimal knowledge of SEL and its tenets. However, one acknowledged that although they had little knowledge of SEL, they may have experience with its training and practices that were never identified to them as such. They could not state conclusively, then, how familiar they were with SEL and the five tenets.

All 10 of the research participants were receptive to incorporating SEL into their classrooms and curriculum. Despite that several of the teachers believed that they did not have a strong background in SEL, each thought that incorporating its ideas would have a positive influence on their students and in the classroom. There was a crucial difference in how receptive each teacher was, and the teachers fell into two coded categories. The first coded category within this subtheme was *enthusiastically receptive*, and the second was *receptive but hesitant*. The eight teachers who were enthusiastically receptive were excited to incorporate SEL in their classrooms for two noteworthy reasons. First, their perceptions of SEL were that it was important for their students to aid in their success. One teacher said that they would even be willing to devote their unpaid time to SEL programming and development.

Second, the teachers who believed SEL skills were important were already incorporating social emotional learning principles or SEL tenets in their classrooms and

had noticed improved behavior in students because of implementing these. For example, Participant Z2 mentioned students who repeated the class for a second time and were known to have discipline problems: “So I gave them a key and they go down the aisles and they check homework . . . and explain it to the students.” The result was that there was a notable “sense of responsibility, sense importance” (Participant Z2). In these students, Participant Z2 added, “If nothing else I saved them from being a major distraction in the class that they’re bored with.”

Other participants were more hesitant. One participant said they hoped that they would be receptive to SEL in the classroom (Participant B7). Another was concerned that incorporating SEL into the classroom would take more time. The participants worried that using SEL in their classroom would put more pressure on them and that to make up for this increased time and workload, they would not be cut slack in other areas (Participant Y5).

Most participants thought that incorporating SEL into their classrooms or the curriculum would be feasible. However, there were some perceived barriers to implementing SEL, presented by the participants. One concern was the issue of class size (Participant Z2). Otherwise, using SEL would be easy if a teacher was open to it, or if the changes were not too “out there,” as described by Participant Y7. This participant also presented the barrier of administration and school officials who were not open to implementing SEL techniques. Participant Y7 stated that SEL includes “practices that the administration might not be ready to embrace.”

Another barrier presented was that at least one teacher self-reported they were unsure of what SEL was (Participant Z3). Another participant disclosed they had seen SEL lessons implemented in a homeroom class, but did not feel that the students benefitted from SEL. The teacher participants varied in their knowledge on how and if SEL aligned with CCSS. Participant Y10 stated that they "didn't know" if the two aligned. Participant Z3 and participant Y7 stated they believed there was some minimal alignment between the two, but that CCSS should align more with SEL. Participant Y6 presented the belief that the alignment would need to begin at the Kindergarten level. Participant Z1 thought SEL and CCSS curriculum could potentially align and could be implemented together successfully, but the extent to which it was successful would be dependent on the individual teacher. Participant Y8 agreed that teachers could "incorporate" SEL skills into CCSS curriculum. Participant Y9 added, "I honestly, I don't think we have enough of the social emotional aspect within the Common Core."

Participant Y4, asserted that SEL was not written into CCSS language. Participant Y5, believed that the success of such an alignment was subject-dependent and that English, for example, was a subject where the tenets of SEL could align easily with CCSS standards. Participant Z3 said, "I would say it's built in because we have modules that we use and that are created and study things that deal with…we're teaching students about how to be great leaders. We're emulating what it means to be an informed and educated citizen." However, Participant Z3 also responded that they did not know what SEL was in the response to the interview question about being receptive to implementing

SEL into the curriculum. Participant Z2 said, “I don’t think it aligns at all with the Common Core” for their class.

Participation in social-emotional learning training. For two of the 10 research participants, their knowledge of SEL and its five tenets may have come from training on the topic of social and emotional needs of students. None of the participants spoke about receiving training specifically on SEL, as outlined by the CASEL, but they did speak to trainings that touched on components of social and emotional learning in general. Two teachers (Participants Y5 and Y6) said they did receive training on SEL at their current school, but after further discussion, the training was not in fact SEL training. Participant Z1 was unsure of what SEL entailed and could not say for certain if they had received SEL training.

Data from Participant Y8 indicated they were the only teacher who had actual knowledge of SEL tenets, because of personal development training in SEL competencies as described by the CASEL. However, in every other case (nine participants), there was not any SEL training or development. The two participants (Y5 and Y6) who believed they had attended SEL training later realized the training was not on SEL (as previously defined), but at best was training that happened to include aspects of social emotional learning. For example, one participant identified a workshop they attended called “Capturing Kids’ Hearts” as an SEL training; however, this would not qualify as an SEL training based on the components of SEL, as previously discussed. This workshop consisted of teachers taking part in an activity where teachers were given scenarios to work through that would help them address the varying needs of their students.

Participants Y6 and Y9 discussed participating in "Rachel's Challenge," as an SEL training; however, after further discussion, this activity was identified as an assembly the entire school participated in that focused on how teachers and students could pay better attention to their environment and other students and classmates. One teacher (Participant Y5) described several trainings that they had participated in as "like a movie" they watched on how to implement SEL into the classroom, and another time that a group came and provided training on several aspects of social and emotional learning. Participant Y5 also described a professional development day in which an author came and presented on her book, but this teacher did not feel that they understood a lot out of the presentation. This participant felt frustrated that the author had the time to come and present on the topic, but that the teachers simply did not have the same time to devote to adequate attention to SEL. Participant Y5 stated,

> I remember walking away feeling, 'that's all great and dandy if you're talking about this, but I have six hours during the day, I have parent-teacher conferences, I have grading to do, I have lesson planning to do, I have testing to do, I have IEPs to write, I have IEPs to hold…that's great you're standing up there and someone who is not a teacher trying to tell me how I need to incorporate this into my classroom'.

Theme 2: Five Tenets of SEL

The information gathered from the research participants in the first theme provided valuable information and insight into what, if anything, they knew of SEL as outlined by the CASEL, where they received this information, and how they thought

about its incorporation into the classroom and its alignment with CCSS standards. The data presented in the first theme came from the first five interview questions. In this second theme, the five tenets of SEL, the data came from the last interview questions (6-11). I designed each interview question to address a specific research subquestion, as reflected in Table 6.

Table 6

Interview Questions 6-9 and Research Subquestions

Interview Question	Research Subquestion
6. Please describe any strategies you employ to integrate students' self-awareness into your classroom curriculum.	1. Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' self-awareness understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?
7. Please describe any strategies you employ to integrate students' self-management into your classroom curriculum.	2. Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' self-management understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?
8. Please describe any strategies you employ to integrate students' social awareness into your classroom curriculum.	3. Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' social awareness understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?
9. Please describe any strategies you employ to integrate students' relationship skills into your classroom curriculum.	4. Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' relationship skills understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?
10. Please describe any strategies you employ to integrate students' decision-making skills into your classroom curriculum.	5. Among these teachers at Title 1, high schools in southern California with racially diverse student populations, how is the SEL competency of students' decision-making skills understood and integrated into the classroom curriculum?

Three subthemes came from the analysis of the responses to these interview questions: SEL and Self, SEL and Others, and SEL and Decisions. The following sections include a more in-depth discussion of these subthemes.

SEL and self. The first two tenets of SEL are those related to the self: self-awareness and self-management. For each tenet, teachers drew from a suite of strategies that they used to help improve students' awareness and management of themselves.

Self-awareness strategies. A key factor for student self-awareness is that they become aware of their behaviors and how their behaviors affect others. This was accomplished in several ways by the teachers, and only one teacher felt they did not actively incorporate these strategies in their classroom. One way that the teachers did this was through social contracts and behavioral correction. This process involved including students in creating a classroom environment of respect, in which their own ideas for maintaining this respect were incorporated. Then, if students acted out in the classroom, the teachers would talk through the situation with the students in accordance with the social contract and discuss how the situation could have been handled better. Another teacher took a different tactic to this, whereby students discussed complex hypothetical scenarios, such as school bullying, and brainstormed appropriate solutions and behaviors.

Other teachers incorporated the tenet of self-awareness directly into the learning material. One teacher, for example, challenged their students to identify with the characters they were reading about in the required literature, while a technology teacher used the concept of *norming* to teach students about appropriate digital citizenship. This

same technology teacher also used icebreakers for self-awareness in the classroom. The participant said,

> they have to write three things down that describe themselves, they have to draw a self-image. We do another project on the computer teaching them how to do graphic design skills, but they have to draw a self-portrait and they turn their first name into an acronym and then they have to take positives (…) vocabulary where there's positive power words that describe words that describe themselves. (Participant Y7)

Another teacher described using personality and intelligence tests for students to learn more about themselves. In group work, this teacher also had students evaluate their contributions to the group. They believed that this provided their students an opportunity to reflect on themselves and the work that they were doing, which "kind of keeps them grounded" (Participant Y8).

Self-management strategies. The second of the five tenets of SEL, also related to the self, is self-management. The study participants described using a variety of strategies for teaching students how to manage themselves. Two of the teachers believed that self-management was something that had to come from the students. For one of these teachers, this meant that they did not employ any additional strategies to assist their students with self-management. The other who believed that self-management was an intrinsic trait, however, used goal-setting to help their students. Another teacher, Participant Z1, discussed this process of goal-setting:

> On the first day, I find out what their goal is, the first day of school. I also find out, over the few weeks, what their obstacles are. Do they have children? Are they working full-time? Do they have a house? Do they get, do they have food? Do they have clothing? Things like that. (..) And then, based on what I know about them at that time, I try to ask the weeks go on, gather more information about them.

Often, goal-setting was used in conjunction with scheduling. Three teachers reported the use of calendaring with their students. For Participant Z1, this meant that the students created their own calendars, but Participants Y6 and Z3 provided calendars and agendas for their students. Participant Z3 said that they do this, "to teach them time management." Participant Y6 also reported that they help students to understand when they work best and then use that information to maximize their time management and productivity. Participants Y10 and Z2 described techniques that provide their students with a sense of agency in the classroom. Participant Y10 allowed student input in classroom decision-making, and Participant Z2 said they allow students their own choice of punishment if they are not following the classroom rules. Participant Y8 helped their students identify their strengths and weaknesses. This strategy helped the students learn where they were most effective, and work on the areas where they identified deficiencies.

SEL and others. The second two tenets of SEL relate to the individual's relationship with others. These tenets include social awareness and relationship skills. The participants described a range of techniques they used to teach these tenets to students.

Social awareness strategies. Two participants described how they incorporated current social or global topics into their classroom assessments. Participant Y8 had students choose problems in their communities that they worked to fix through a classroom project. Participant Z3 did something similar, in that students were assigned essays to write on current social topics. Participant Z3 also employed Socratic seminars as means to teach social awareness, as did Participant Y10. Two other participants described teaching tolerance and respect for others. Participant Y4, for example, challenged their students to examine experiences from multiple viewpoints. Participant Y8 introduced students to social awareness through technology by incorporating projects where students had to solve current social problems by using technology. Another strategy that several teachers (Y6 and Y9) spoke of was using Rachel's Challenge, which was presented at an assembly to the entire school including students and support staff to begin a conversation about respect and empathy. Participant Y6 brought this strategy into their classroom, where students were challenged to do small, random acts of kindness for others.

Relationship skills strategies. One participant, Y9, stated they did not do anything to build students' relationship skills. The other participants build these strategies into classroom activities and projects. One teacher did not allow any name calling or cheating in their classroom. Two teachers used group work to promote relationship skills among their students. These practices ranged from simply arranging the classroom so that students sat in teams, to self-evaluation based on how well the group worked together on a project. Two teachers described the ways they teach relationship skills in the digital

age. One modeled how to write appropriate communications via email, while another described teaching students to filter and ignore negative information and communication that they, as students, may be exposed to on the Internet. Another participant described how they taught communication skills at the beginning of the term, spending a lot of time specifically on listening and speaking skills. Finally, two participants described the use of team building activities to promote relationships.

SEL and decisions. The final of the five tenets of SEL is that of decision-making. The teachers provided a lot of opportunities for their students to have agency and make decisions in the classroom. Two participants did this through goal-setting. Working backwards from the goals that students identified for themselves, one teacher walked their students through the decisions the students would need to make to achieve their goals. Another teacher used goal-setting to help students make decisions about how they can tailor their careers toward their talents. Another participant had students map out their weeks by hour to encourage them to make decisions about time management. For assignments, one participant described giving students choices about project topics within minimal specified parameters, and another gave the students the option to complete their homework in class or at home. One of the participants, a yearbook adviser, used the yearbook to teach decision-making skills, particularly in groups.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the research setting and participants, and presented the factors and precautions that I took to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Then, I presented the results of this research study. There were two emergent themes. First, most

participants felt they had at least some working knowledge of social emotional learning, which they perceived to be SEL and its five tenets. Secondly, participants also expressed interest in incorporating SEL into their classrooms, but they varied in terms of how likely they thought this was possible. Furthermore, all but one participant described ways that they implemented at least one activity that resembled the five tenets of SEL into their classroom. This was the case even for participants who had not received formal training on SEL specifically, as outlined by the CASEL.

Therefore, 9 of 10 participants had perceptions about the importance of social emotional learning in general and attempted in numerous ways to employ some form of SEC learning in the classroom; while not specific in implementation and without training or knowledge of SEL according to the CASEL.

In Chapter 5, I discuss these research findings, the limitations, and the implications for future research. I also discuss the implications for practice in the context of positive social change in public policy and provide recommendations for incorporating SEL into classrooms. I conclude with a discussion on the importance of including SEL in CCSS curriculum and standards.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore teachers' self-reported knowledge and implementation of SEL skills in public high school settings. Although social and emotional skills are largely ignored in U.S. public policy and public high school curricula, the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 indicated SEL competencies have a significant positive influence on students' school behavior and academic achievement (see Castro-Olivo, 2014; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Durlak et al., 2011). Public policy influences public school curricula, as well as teacher training programs and professional development (Wiseman, 2012). The overall study findings show that teachers believe SEL components are important for student learning, although teachers were not implementing true SEL techniques because of lack of knowledge and training about SEL. However, each of the participants (n = 10) expressed beliefs that without direct policy mandates and funding for specific SEL curricula and teacher training regarding implementation, there will not be enough support for the development of SEL skills in students. This phenomenological study was designed to explore teachers' self-reported knowledge and classroom implementation of the theoretical concepts and competencies for social emotional learning established by the CASEL. The five social and emotional competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills. Specifically, this study pertained to what secondary teachers at California schools understood about SEL competencies and how they integrated them into classroom curricula. Findings of this

study may contribute to public policy reforms in education curricula and teacher development.

This study produced two major themes and five subthemes concerning teacher knowledge, perceptions, and implementation of SEL skills. One significant theme was teachers' prior knowledge of SEL and included two subthemes: Teachers' beliefs about SEL and teacher participation in SEL training and development. The second key theme was directly related to the five tenets of SEL, and had the subthemes of SEL and self, SEL and others, and SEL and decision making. These findings illustrate strategies used by teachers in the classroom to instill social emotional skillsets as well as personal beliefs on the topic.

Interpretations of the Findings

The data from this research presented two major themes and five subthemes regarding teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and implementation of SEL competencies:

1. Theme 1: Prior Knowledge of SEL
    a. Subtheme: Beliefs about Social Emotional Learning
    b. Subtheme: Participation in Social Emotional Learning Training
2. Theme 2: Five Tenets of SEL
    a. Subtheme: SEL and Self (awareness and management)
    b. Subtheme: SEL and Others (social awareness and relationship skills)
    c. Subtheme: SEL and Decisions (responsible decision making)

The interpretations of these findings are related to the literature presented in Chapter 2 and extend knowledge on SEL regarding secondary public high school teachers'

perceptions of SEL competencies. Furthermore, study findings both confirm and diverge from previous findings on SEL in public policy.

The findings for Theme 1 suggest that even though none of the teachers received formal training specific to SEL competencies and implementation at their schools, they were receptive to teaching SEL and tried to implement SEL techniques to some degree but had difficulty because of minimal knowledge and training. For example, several of the participants mentioned they taught topics such as aspects of globalization and the need to build strong communities in relation to leadership skills.

Several participants also discussed assisting students in identifying personal strengths and admonishing them to use positive power words to describe themselves. Power words were developed through classroom exercises where students take turns identifying one another's positive qualities, such as *reliable*, *helpful*, or *determined*. Classroom instruction by these teachers that create opportunities for social interactions and promote relationships confirms that these teachers are using some form of SEL concepts to develop social emotional skills (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Even so, teachers are unaware of how these concepts directly relate to SEL competencies.

Education in public policies is often influenced by the economic demands and values of NL, as well as calls for academic accountability, which may be partially responsible for lack of implementation of and training in SEL. Researchers contend a major force behind the lack of SEL policy in curricula and the dearth of teacher training in SEL is an overemphasis on students' measurable skills deemed economically valuable, such as those associated with STEM (Allais, 2012; Ball, 2007; Fine & Milonakis, 2009).

Neoliberalism viewpoints include a belief in the value of free market capitalism, which can lead to public policies that favor developing measurable and economically-valued skills, such as those associated with STEM, while disregarding the social emotional values of SEL and the development of economically sound human capital (Allais, 2012; Ball, 2007; Humphrey, 2013; Lundahl, 2012). Additionally, focus on academic achievement and high-stakes testing in secondary grades may help explain the lack of SEL in the curriculum (Humphrey, 2013). SEL components are fundamental to students' social and emotional development and have been shown to increase academic and economic success (Civic Enterprises et al., 2013), necessitating reevaluation of policies driven strictly by NL perspectives.

More than half of the participants described SEL implementation in the classroom as easy enough. However, four out of 10 teachers in this study (n = 40%) were not so sure. Although these four were receptive to SEL in the classroom, they voiced concerns that it would be difficult to implement because of the already scripted curricula, large class sizes, and no specific training in implementing SEL competencies. They did not know whether SEL would be difficult to implement because they were unsure of what SEL was exactly, or expressed confusion about whether SEL fit into the classroom environment at all. Participant Y5 stated:

> Some of the stuff I didn't really feel like it was social learning. I didn't feel like the lessons were engaging for the students. I didn't see that it was making a difference in the students.

Current educational practices often do not include a focus on SEL, which may explain why teachers are unsure of what it is and how it applies to students' learning needs (Dusenbury, Weissberg, et al., 2014). Cochran et al. (2009) argued the country's economic demands drive outcomes-based frameworks in education and testing policies that measure students' academic test scores as outputs or tools for policymakers to implement specific legislation (i.e., STEM and CCSS programs).

The findings of the present study also support previous findings that there is no alignment between CCSS and SEL. Two participants believed that implementation depended on the teachers' willingness to actually implement SEL practices. Not only are teachers not being instructed on how to teach SEL, but SEL practices are not incorporated into the curriculum (Elias, 2014). Elias (2014) contended that a certain degree of social and emotional skills is required of students to successfully complete the skillset contents of CCSS. Even so, the CCSS curriculum does not involve SEL competencies as part of the skills integral to academic and career success (Beers, 2011; Croft et al., 2016). Dusenbury, Weissberg, et al. (2014) asserted that teachers need guidance on how to create positive learning environments, which are vital to developing SEL.

Eight teacher participants reported they had not received SEL specific training or personal development from their schools. Two teachers in the present study reported having received what they interpreted to be SEL training; however, based on the definition of SEL from the literature, only one participant had some true training in SEL competencies as defined by the CASEL (2015). However, this participant responded

"none" when asked if they had received any past training or personal development in SEL. Even so, this participant's interview responses indicated they had specific SEL training in tenure at a previous school (Participant Y8). One participant received minimal information on the topic from a guest speaker, who authored a book on SEL, during a full-day personal development training session; however, without follow-up practical application of the discussion provided.

Given the lack of formal training regarding SEL, it is no surprise that the findings of this study indicated many teachers (nine out of 10 participants) were unclear about what SEL is and incorrectly viewed some of their personal development training as SEL training when it was not. Most of the teachers' descriptions of SEL training did not fit the categories of actual SEL competencies at all. For example, one teacher attended training provided by the district (on SEL) that focused on yoga methods as a means for students to learn calming techniques, held in a gym. This participant perceived this as SEL training because it was presented by the school district as social emotional training (Participant Y5).

Findings from this study support scholars' contentions that many schools' versions of what is, and what is not, social emotional learning vary to critical degrees (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012; Castro-Olivo, 2014). Additionally, based on the perspectives of the teachers in this study, information and training on social and emotional learning, as presented by their schools is not beneficial for teachers nor is it beneficial for their students. One participant explained

that some training was not practical for the classroom and that students were not receptive to the idea (Participant Y7).

Many participants believed SEL was important and could aid in students' academic success, which supports the findings previous research on the benefits of social and emotional skills and their overall positive influence on behavioral issues and mastering academic challenges (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Durlak et al., 2011). However, Humphrey (2013) maintained that in public policy, social and emotional learning is hardly ever viewed as an educational priority, which is especially true in secondary education.

SEL learning strategies may be especially important for low SES students, as research indicates higher levels of care are needed in these demographic areas because of income disparities (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Hamedani et al., 2015). Results of the present study support this research, as all 10 of the participants believed developing skills in social emotional competences is important and necessary, especially in serving low SES students. Additionally, the teacher participants of this study indicated a strong awareness of the emotional needs of their students. This finding supports the importance of emotional learning for adolescents because adolescence is a stage of development marked by significant physical, emotional, social, and cognitive change, making recognizing the emotional needs of students a priority in secondary school and should be a priority in forming public policies (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). Furthermore, during adolescence, students undergo acute self-awareness (Sebastian et al., 2008). Participants not only asserted that social and emotional competencies are necessary and useful in the

classroom, but also that teachers overwhelmingly believed opportunities exist where social emotional learning strategies can be implemented into the classroom. Additionally, teachers are using variations of the CASEL's social emotional learning skills, in addition to implementing CCSS mandates, although teachers were not specifically aware that they were using SEL practices.

The findings for Theme 2 revealed participants use a variety of strategies to teach their students self-awareness and self-management concepts, which are related to the subtheme of SEL and self. Teachers combined self-awareness and self-management concepts with strategies for time management and an awareness of individual learning styles, in addition to allowing student input in class decision making. Such educational strategies included social contracts, wherein students collectively devised class guidelines and were required to abide by these established agreed-upon rules. Eight out of 10 participants creatively used curriculum opportunities to promote social emotional learning activities coded in the present study as SEL and self. Other activities teachers used that may align with SEL competencies are personality tests, self-evaluations of individual contributions to group work, and writing or drawing self-images or portraits as positive ways for students to describe themselves (CASEL, 2015).

Study findings indicate that teachers are implementing other social emotional learning activities like those found in the SEL competencies, such as awareness of feelings, management of feelings, constructive sense of self, and perspective taking (Payton et al., 2000). For example, eight out of 10 teachers are implementing social-awareness strategies and incorporating them into classroom activities, such as

acknowledging a social issue or problem in the community and working as a group on ways to make changes. Also, essay assignments focused on current events in culture, such as tolerance and respect.

Findings indicated that most participants used social emotional learning activities to teach decision-making skills across the board. These activities are similar to the SEL competencies of problem identification, social norm analysis, adaptive goal setting, and problem solving (Payton et al., 2000). Activities include goal-setting, discussion of decisions needed to reach goals, and using goals matched with students' talents to make future career plans. One participant allows students to choose their own assignments within set parameters. Additionally, one participant allows students to complete assignments in class or at home. One participant stated that she regularly checks in with her students to ensure that other areas of students' lives are going well. This way, the participant is able assist in managing possible conflicts with assignments before a problem occurs. Participant Y9 expressed that nothing is done in the classroom to foster relationship skills. Participant Y5 said name calling and disrespect is not allowed in the classroom. These activities correspond to SEL social interaction skills competencies, such as active listening, expressive communication, cooperation, negotiation, refusal, and help seeking (Payton et al., 2000).

A novel finding of the present study was that SEL concepts are misrepresented in the educational practices of the schools in this study. Eight high school teacher participants self-reported they did not have much knowledge in SEL competencies. Two reported to be more than comfortable with their knowledge of SEL (Y8 and Y6). When

asked to describe any past coursework, professional development, or workshops they participated in that focused specifically on SEL, eight participants could not recall any past training or coursework and two reported yes to having past experiences with SEL trainings. These findings support the significance of this study, and why this study needed to be conducted. Social emotional learning is important and necessary for adolescents to achieve their full potential in the classroom and in the global community (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Croft et al., 2016; Hamedani et al., 2015). Even so, teachers self-reported a lack of knowledge and experience in SEL competencies.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the perceptions, experiences, and beliefs of 10 Title 1 public high school teachers in California schools. A sample size of 10 for a phenomenological study may be considered a limitation (Francis et al., 2010). However, interviews with 10 teachers was the number of interviews at which point saturation was achieved. I conducted continuous data analysis until saturation was achieved. Because of the relative homogeneity of the sample and the fact that many teachers were not familiar with SEL concepts as outlined by CASEL, reaching saturation of the data at 10 interviews was not unexpected.

Additionally, studies completed in other regions may produce different results. This study was conducted at a Title 1 public high school, with a culturally diverse student population; interviewing teachers from private high schools and high schools in higher SES regions may yield different results. Also, findings from this study may not generalizable to the larger population of teachers at Title 1 high schools in California and

in the nation. Qualitative studies, however, involve smaller sample sizes and are designed to collect in-depth information on participants' experiences and perceptions, unlike quantitative studies with large sample sizes designed for statistical certainty and generalizability. Trustworthiness was ensured throughout the data collection and analysis processes for each participant. Participants' perceptions and experiences were reflected as accurately as possible. I also used member checking to help ensure credibility. Last, the study was bound by time constraints in that data collection occurred at one point, Fall semester 2017, rather than during several different points, which may have yielded different results.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study revealed the need for further research on how to develop and implement SEL trainings for teachers. Additionally, future researcher should consider creating instruments to measure student outcomes when SEL is implemented. High school teachers are open to formal SEL implementation; however, findings show teachers are limited because they do not have the necessary training, development, and administrative support to correctly apply SEL competencies to the classroom environment. Future research is recommended on better understanding the barriers to integrating SEL into the curricula, possibly into current public policies like CCSS. Additionally, future researchers should address the personal, social, and emotional knowledge of teachers through the construct of emotional intelligence. One participant of the study noted the importance of teachers having a good sense of their own social and emotional competencies. Last, a better understanding of the cultural identity of teachers

themselves may help to reveal how cultural identity influences teachers' views on implementation practices and beliefs in relation to socioemotional concepts.

Implications

Public policies and CCSS that include SEL into the classroom are necessary to balance the current focus on neo-liberalistic and economically motivated practices, and in doing so may produce positive social change. Neoliberalism downplays the importance of SEL components as necessary parts of education, and public policy needs to be reevaluated in different terms, ones that do not overemphasize measurable skills that only hold economic value. Participants of this study overwhelming agreed with one another and with scholars that SEL in secondary student education is worthwhile in developing economically sound human capital (Alias, 2012).

The findings of this study yielded information concerning social and emotional learning and public high school teachers' understanding and implementations of SEL. The findings clearly indicated that teachers need clarification of and education regarding SEL competencies, as outlined by the CASEL. This can happen with adequate teacher training and support from school administrators, policymakers, educators, parents, and local community business partners. Initial pathways to understanding SEL and classroom implementation begins with formal SEL program implementation.

The literature reviewed confirmed that SEL programs initiated by new public policy need to align with specific guidelines set forth to achieve the best outcomes in schools and that stakeholders must address SEL by acknowledging the importance of the

environments and contexts in which learning takes place, not just the academic content of what is taught (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Croft et al., 2016).

Current strategies used to implement SEL concepts in the classroom, based on this study's findings, are limited at best. SEL implementation ideally involves participation of teachers, students, parents, and administrators. SEL programs are designed to include the entire community, including the collaboration of business and local government officials (Humphrey, 2013). The findings of the study also have implications for positive social change. Education stakeholders and policymakers may begin to realize the benefits of SEL that students are missing because of the lack of teacher training and the ability to implement SEL in the classroom. Even so, participants clearly stated that SEL is compatible with the current public policy regarding CCSS, and that SEL should be included in that curricula. Such a realization may influence policy reform; as the literature suggests, policymakers must begin to consider social and emotional skills as fundamental to achieving desired educational outcomes (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Elias, 2014; Hamedani et al., 2015).

Conclusion

SEL skills training has the long-term ability to positively affect a global economic climate so revered by culture. Most importantly, SEL skills training may produce culturally-sensitive and diversity-minded citizens who are economically sound producers and consumers, as well as emotionally and socially competent individuals in their communities. Revisiting policy would help to set the groundwork for informing

education administrators and educating teachers about SEL components and their inclusion in curricula.

The current study revealed that teachers who participated hold favorable thoughts and opinions about SEL. Social and emotional learning (SEL) concepts are identified as certain skillsets, such as self-management and conflict resolution, positive decision making, and relationship skills. When purposely implemented in the teaching environment, these skills may produce more successful teacher-student engagement and may enhance academic achievement in students.

Currently, there are no specific public policies that require SEL be included in the CCSS high school curricula. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether high school teachers knew about SEL concepts, and if they did, how they are incorporating SEL competencies into the classroom. However, this study's findings confirm that teachers, even without formal training, structures, and policies in place, value and are attempting to teach social and emotional skills using activities that resemble the competencies of SEL concepts as described by the CASEL (2015). This study highlighted the importance of social emotional skills, even though they [teachers] think it is important to teach social and emotional skills, they lack knowledge of SEL competencies, training, and implementation practices. Therefore, a need exists to develop education policies about SEL for teachers, as well as strategies for teaching and implementing this type of learning.

The U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education may merge into a single Cabinet agency (Reshaping American Government in the 21st Century, 2018). Such departmental restructuring recommendations have implications for service delivery and enhancing the missions of public policy (Reshaping American Government in the 21st Century, 2018). The reform plan, Reshaping American Government in the 21st Century (2018), specifically speaks to meeting the needs of American students. Additionally, there is language contained in these recommendations to promote student skill development to meet the needs of workplace demands. This would ensure future jobs and a lucrative economy (Reshaping American Government in the 21st Century, 2018). Based on the findings of this study, policymakers should consider including SEL curricula within any possible forthcoming public policy mandates and reforms to the CCSS.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. How much do you know about Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?
2. How receptive are you to incorporate Social and Emotional Learning to the curriculum?
3. How difficult would it be to implement SEL learning concepts to the classroom curriculum?
4. Please describe any past coursework, professional development, or workshops you have participated in, which focused on social and emotional learning.
5. Based on your understanding of the Common Core State Standards, how do you think social and emotional learning aligns, if at all?
6. Please describe any strategies you employ to integrate students' self-awareness into your classroom curriculum.
7. Please describe any strategies you employ to integrate students' self-management into your classroom curriculum.
8. Please describe any strategies you employ to integrate students' social awareness into your classroom curriculum.
9. Please describe any strategies you employ to integrate students' relationship skills into your classroom curriculum.
10. Please describe any strategies you employ to integrate students' decision-making skills into your classroom curriculum.

11. Do you have any additional thoughts on social and emotional learning among students at your school that you would like to share? If so, please share at this time.