

Spring 1-1-2018

The Playful Heart: Examining Emotion and Imagination in Equity-Oriented Teaching and Learning

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**The Playful Heart: Examining Emotion and Imagination in Equity-Oriented
Teaching and Learning**

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A three-article dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of
Colorado Boulder in partial fulfillment of the degree requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education

2018

The thesis entitled:

**The Playful Heart: Examining Emotion and Imagination in Equity-Oriented
Teaching and Learning**

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above-mentioned disciplines

IRB protocol #s 17-0432 and 17-0161

Abstracts

Price, Emily Claire (Ph.D., Educational Foundations, Policy, and Practice)

The Playful Heart: Examining Emotion and Imagination in Equity-Oriented Teaching and Learning

Dissertation chaired by Professor Dan Liston and Associate Professor A. Susan Jurow

The articles contained in this three-article dissertation collectively attend to the role of emotion in equity-oriented teaching and learning. In each article, I consider the way in which emotion is constituted, framed, and attended to in one of three areas of educational research and practice, each of which is situated at a point of tension between a real or perceived limit on the time and space afforded for authentic emotion to emerge and the desire to attend to it. In discussing these sites of discord, I consider how we can create space for emotion and emotional thought to emerge at both planned and unanticipated junctures.

1. **Toward an Expansive Approach to Social Emotional Learning: Considering the Role of Emotion in Equity-Oriented and Learning**

This article reviews the development of the curricular domain of social emotional learning and considers new directions for the field in response to critiques about its limited attention to culture and identity. I contend that the current framing operates from a cognitivist framing, and argue for a move towards a more expansive approach to SEL rooted in sociocultural theory. I propose a move from the current core competency framework to a three-domain model that emphasizes identity and relationship. After detailing this expansive approach, I consider the implications for the design of equity-oriented teaching and learning in the emotional domain.

2. **On Belonging: Children Respond to Trump through Play and Imagination**

This article documents the ways in which elementary students enrolled in the EPIC afterschool club used play as a means of attending to issues of inequity they faced in the months before, during and after the election of Donald Trump. Drawing upon two years of data within a social design experiment, we describe how students engaged in interpretive reproduction as a means of interrogating, processing their emotions about, and acting upon injustice. Arguing for a view of children as social actors, we analyze how the students operationalized play as a means of repositioning themselves in response to negative characterizations, and centered explorations of identity, belonging, and what it means to be a member of a community.

3. **Honoring the Relationship Between Teacher and Student Emotion: Implications for the Design of Professional Developments Focused on Social Emotional Well-Being**

This article details the findings of a qualitative interview study that investigated how elementary teachers who participated in a professional development sequence on social emotional development characterized the role of emotion in their students' learning process, and the space they have for attending to their students' emotional well-being in their classroom or school. Our findings point to the importance of considering teacher identity and the interrelationship between teacher and student emotion when designing professional developments designed to support teacher social and emotional well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a Tuesday afternoon at the EPIC afterschool club, and most of the third – fifth graders have just entered the cafeteria after a brief period outside for some sunshine, fresh air, and physical activity. The volume is high, as students are still breathing heavily from their time on the basketball court or the playground, and are starting to make plans for the day’s activities. The elementary students are gathered in small groups with their university partners, finding their journal, picking out materials to make costumes or props, or just chatting informally as one of the day’s site facilitators works to get everyone’s attention to go over the goals for the day. As he speaks, Sam, an intelligent, thoughtful, and affectionate third grader with a penchant for plaid flannel and an interest in horror films, begins making loud noises from the back of the room. He pauses whenever the site facilitator stops talking, and starts again as soon as the site facilitator begins speaking again. He is mimicking the facilitator, but he is smiling throughout, signaling that his intent is playful, rather than malicious. He is not saying words, but is filling the air with a high-pitched squeal somewhat like that of an ambulance siren that rivals the facilitator’s speaking voice. He is creating space for himself in the discussion that he remains physically removed from, standing at the back of the room. He is not engaging in the conversation in the terms under which it has been laid out, but is still signaling his desire to participate, albeit by altering the subject and format of the discussion. The facilitator, displaying both patience and an ability to improvise, shortens his prepared introduction, and encourages elementary and university students to come see him if they have any questions as they set about their plans for the day. As the rest of the students disperse to gather their items and find a space to work, Sam hides under a table near the back of the room.

Interrupting a group discussion with loud noises is not part of a typical day at EPIC for Sam, but it is not unprecedented either. Having worked with Sam for about six months at this point, I had come to recognize that in those moments, Sam was signaling his need for attention and support. He was processing something, though I had no idea what on this occasion, and he needed companionship to do it. I also knew that asking Sam about it outright would usually shut down the conversation. When Sam was working through something, at least in the space of EPIC, he would often tag back and forth between fantasy and reality, developing fictional characters and worlds in which he attended to issues in his everyday life. Sometimes it was clear to me what he was working through, but more often than not, I didn't know which of the issues that surfaced in the play scenario was representative of whatever component of his reality he was struggling with.

Walking over to Sam, I knelt down and peered underneath the table, and first asked if he would like to work on the play he had been hard at work developing over the last several sessions. He smiled and started to crawl away, towards the far end of the table. Recognizing this as an invitation to play rather than a moment of defiance, I got on my hands and knees and, outside of the table, crawled up beside him. "Sam," I asked, "are you in a cave? Is that why you are crawling? Do you need help getting out?" He looked at me for a split second with a confused expression, then smiled wide realizing my entry point into the play. After a brief pause, he said in a serious, measured tone, "No, it's an air vent. I am crawling because I am stuck in the air vent."

"Ohhh!" I said. "I gotcha." Looking around, I pointed to the other side of the table. "Look, Sam! I think there is an opening over here. Can you squeeze through this space?" He said

he thought so, and crawled over, but as he mimicked pushing the door, he grimaced. “The door is stuck!” he said with panic. “Quick – you have to go pull the lever!” He pointed to a nearby chair. I started twisting the knobs on the chair, asking if the door opened as I tried each one. Finally, after several tries, Sam told me the door opened, but now he needed help getting out of the vent. He could only get his arms out, so I needed to pull him the rest of the way. I feigned having to pull very hard, but the slippery linoleum floor really did the work, as I pulled Sam free from the vent. His face was more relaxed and he laughed, seeming to enjoy the slippery ride and his recovered freedom. “That was great,” he said, “let’s do it again.” And we did, over and over, with different issues presenting themselves each time, and with us developing new solutions together to overcome them. For example, in the third retelling of the scene, Sam was covered in dust and needed to use an emergency eyewash station before continuing. By the fourth time, the dust had become radioactive, and Sam had to go through a much more extensive round of decontamination. In the fifth round, Sam broke his leg on the way out and needed to be transported to the hospital for an x-ray and a cast.

By this point, others had joined our play, observing for a moment, asking clarifying questions about the premise, and jumping in themselves as actors or offering suggestions for new plot twists. One elementary student became the doctor at the hospital, and ran off to get supplies to make a cast. One elementary student also entered the ‘vent,’ but quickly freed herself, noting that she was invincible. Yet another student suggested the possibility of our stopping time to free Sam. After approximately 15 minutes and seven scenes, Sam appeared satisfied, looking around at the group of students who had gathered and were helping him to walk with both of his legs in casts and smiling. He nodded to the student who had said she was invincible, saying, “I’m

invincible too now!” and ripping his casts off before wandering off to grab his journal and return to writing his play.

At the EPIC afterschool club, Sam exists at the intersection of fantasy and reality, and readily dances between them. For both him and many other students at EPIC who are contending with difficult life circumstances, engaging in play scenes does not reduce the gravity of the situations they are faced with, but places it in a format that is familiar and approachable. In attending to students’ emotional well-being, what is required of us as teachers is not only an attention to what issues our students are grappling with, but also to what language they want to use to process it. For Sam, that language is fantasy play. His impromptu scenes often feature him getting ‘stuck’ – in an air vent, in the back of a restaurant that closed for the night, or inside a giant marshmallow, for example. I will likely not know what he is processing every time he gets ‘stuck’, though I try. But I do know that through his multiple retellings, he is considering possibilities for how to get ‘unstuck’, both figuratively and in real life, and what he is asking for in those moments is for someone to be there with him while he figures it out. Largely, that’s what this dissertation study is about: considering what critically attending to students’ emotional well-being in learning environments looks like, exploring what the role of play is in approaching it with young students, and designing professional development opportunities for teachers to learn techniques for attending to both their own and their students’ emotional well-being as part of equity-oriented teaching and learning.

These inquiries are connected by the central premise that emotion is integral to the process of learning. While the dominant discourse on learning maintains that it is a purely cognitive function, occurring exclusively inside of one’s head and separate from emotion and sensory processes, both sociocultural theories of learning and advances in neuroscience research

challenge this characterization of learning as an individual, cognitive process. First, sociocultural theories of learning in education have demonstrated the extent to which learning is a social process, occurring in and through interaction with others. Additionally, a sociocultural approach emphasizes the import of society, culture, and history on what and how one learns (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Context must be considered, as learning and identity operate simultaneously as individual and social processes (Nasir, 2012). Recent research in neuroscience supports a sociocultural framing of learning, providing insight into how social, historical, and economic circumstances have shaped how what's inside of one's head functions (Amsterlaw, Lagattuta, & Meltzoff, 2009; DeBellis & Zisk, 2014). Additionally, research in neuroscience has highlighted the critical role of emotion in informing real-world decision making in social contexts, suggesting that emotion is necessary for retrieving and determining how and when to apply skills and knowledge learned in schools, as well as provided evidence that emotion and cognition are not separate processes as was once thought. Immordino-Yang & Damasio (2007) argue that strict adherence to the dichotomy between cognition and emotion may not only obscure the fact that emotions comprise cognitive as well as sensory processes, but also that the aspects of cognition that are most heavily drawn upon in schools, including attention, memory, and motivation, are both affected by and subsumed within the processes of emotion. Summarizing this position, they state, "Yes, rational thought and reasoning do exist, although hardly ever truly devoid of emotion, but they cannot be recruited appropriately and usefully in the real world without emotion. Emotions help to direct our reasoning into the sector of knowledge that is relevant to the current situation or problem" (pp. 7-8).

Thus, the purpose of this dissertation study is not to ask if emotion impacts the learning process, as there is ample research in the fields of psychology, education, and neuroscience that

indicate that it is fact a part of the learning process, but rather, the aim of this study is to examine *how* emotion functions in the process of equity-oriented teaching and learning in particular. I focus this investigation across three contexts, each of which is located at a site of tension between a recognition of the import of emotion to learning, and the space provided to attend to it. Additionally, each of the sites of inquiry are timely in their focus, responding to current issues in education reform or the broader social and political context.

The first article is a conceptual argument, aimed at proposing a new expansive approach to social emotional learning (SEL). This article is unique from the other two in that the tension it describes is located within a curricular domain instead of a physical site. It provides the foundation for the two empirical investigations that follow it by outlining how emotion and learning are framed in the current model of SEL. Due to the foothold SEL currently has in public schools in the U.S., understanding what the critiques are with respect to its foundational theories and practice are critical for the subsequent empirical investigations, which seek to examine what attending to emotion in an expansive approach might look like, first for elementary students, and second, for elementary teachers.

In Toward an Expansive Approach to Social Emotional Learning, Considering the Role of Emotion in Equity-Oriented Teaching and Learning, I argue that the growth of SEL programming over the last twenty years has provided a much-needed means of attending to students' emotional well-being during school days that are increasingly narrow in their focus on the attainment of measurable, academic skills. SEL has gained wide acceptance in schools in large part of the positive academic outcomes associated with exposure to SEL programming. Perhaps it is not surprising then that the most widely-used approaches to SEL instruction are stand-alone programs that prioritize the development individual students' ability to identify,

manage, and regulate their own emotions – effectively mirroring the emphasis on individual skills in the academic curriculum. While recognizing and managing emotions are important skills, they do not sufficiently address students’ emotional well-being in and of themselves. In this article, I argue that a comprehensive approach to SEL must also include attention to the social, cultural, and historical conditions that shape children’s lives, including their emotions and their relationships. I center this argument around two framing questions: *How can sociocultural theories be used to organize a more expansive approach to SEL?* and *What are the implications for how we design for equity-oriented teaching and learning?* In answering these questions, I trace the development of the field from 1995 to 2018, and highlight what I perceive as a tension between SEL’s foundational theories, which speak to the necessity of collaboration, community, and relationships in school settings, and the way it is most commonly being practiced. I argue that the current five core competency model relies on a cognitivist model of learning that is not well-suited for our current understanding of how emotion operates in tandem with rational thought to produce learning, or how culture, societal institutions and structures, and history shape what we learn and how. For SEL to be beneficial to all of our students and teachers as individuals and in community, we need to create space for explicit and critical explorations of the ways social constructs of identity impact the way we move in and through the world and return to SEL’s roots in relationship. Drawing on sociocultural theories of learning, I introduce a three-domain framework for an expansive approach to SEL which centers the explorations of self, other, and relationship, as well as introduces a focus on developing humanizing structures of classroom management – knowing that SEL is often being turned to for this purpose. As I argue, a sociocultural lens addresses the mutually constitutive nature of learning and identity development, recognizes the role of culture, societal institutions, and history in shaping

knowledge and the learning process, and creates space for emotion to operate in tandem with cognition in the process of learning. This expanded approach to SEL is particularly important for equity-oriented approaches to teaching and learning, which seek to transform, rather than reproduce, hierarchical power dynamics along lines of race, class, and gender. I am formatting this article for submission to the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* or *Curriculum Inquiry*.

In the second article, we return to Sam and the other elementary school students enrolled at EPIC, an afterschool literacy, arts, and technology design club co-facilitated by the University of Colorado at Boulder's School of Education and Alicia Sanchez International Elementary School. In *On Belonging: Children Respond to Trump through Play and the Imagination*, my co-author and I investigate how students used play as a means of making sense of and emotionally responding to social inequities they were experiencing in the months before, during, and after the election of Donald Trump. This article expands on the first in its examination of the design, use, and outcomes of play, which was a promising practice identified for developing an expansive approach SEL with young students. This article has been accepted for publication in *Radical Teacher*, and will appear in July 2018's special issue *Teaching in the Age of Trumpism*.

Having just finished its eighth year, the club meets three days a week and offers free afterschool programming for children ages seven – 11. The club is dedicated to improving the academic, social, and emotional learning opportunities for the elementary students, a significant percentage of whom are racial and ethnic minorities living in poverty, and to preparing a majority middle-class white female population of pre-service teachers, with limited experience working with historically marginalized communities effectively (Cole & the Distributed Literacy Consortium, 2006). In an effort to support culturally relevant and meaningful learning and teaching, the authors design semester-long theme units that promote the exploration of issues of

equity with which students are actively contending through play. We conceptualize play as a form of improvised storytelling, which includes both recurring and improvised elements.

In this article, we drew on qualitative data that I collected between spring 2016 and fall 2017 to analyze the topics and issues addressed in both planned and impromptu play scenes, as well as the ways in which children responded emotionally and through direct social action. Our primary sources of data included author fieldnotes, pre-service teacher fieldnotes, artifacts created during the play scenes, and photographs and video recordings of select play scenes. In our analysis, we found that in the months leading up to and following Trump's election, issues of identity and belonging were central themes in the children's play. As a large number of our students are themselves, or are children or grandchildren of, Mexican immigrants, the question of what it means to belong and who gets to decide were consequential, personal, and timely issues. In the article, we analyze two play scenes using the lens of *interpretive reproduction* (Corsaro, 2005), which exemplified how children interrogated the current conditions, rehearsed their emotional responses, and imagined more equitable futures. We argue that the children's use of play to make sense of consequential issues highlights the degree to which children are agentic beings, and that even young children should be afforded opportunities to explore issues of equity and emotion that they are actively contending with.

While the second article is an empirical study of children's emotion in learning in situ through play, the third article *Honoring the Relationship Between Teacher and Student Emotion: Implications for the Design of Professional Development Focused on Social Emotional Well-Being*, describes an empirical investigation of the role of emotion in elementary teachers' lives and practice. The qualitative interview study that this paper describes centers on how teachers who participated in a three-session professional development (PD) sequence on social emotional

development characterized the role of and space for emotion in their own lives and practice, in their students' learning process, and the space they have for attending to both their own and their students' emotional well-being in their classroom or school. The PD sequence that the elementary teachers participated in were part of a collaboration on SEL and mindfulness between the Boulder Valley School District and a project team led by Dr. Sona Dimidjian, the Principal Investigator (PI) and a professor in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at the University of Colorado Boulder. The team included professors, graduate students, and teacher educators in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Dr. Ben Kirshner from the School of Education, and me. In a separate research article, we describe the process of co-designing the professional development sequence with elementary teachers in the district, as well as the self-reported teacher-level outcomes following the conclusion of the sequence. In this article, I focus the analysis on the interviews I conducted with participating teachers following the PD sequence. By examining how the participating teachers view the role of emotion in their own and their students' lives, as well as how they describe the role of emotion in navigating this sequence of sessions, we set out to consider how we can better design professional development opportunities, particularly those focused on social and emotional well-being being for students, that account for the critical role of teachers' emotions in teaching and learning. This study was guided by the following research question: *How do teachers who participated in a professional development sequence focused on social emotional development describe the role of and space for emotion in teaching and learning?* A key finding of this analysis was the interrelationship we found between teacher and student emotion. We discuss how this relates to the ways in which the participating teachers identify teaching as a vocation, rather than as a job or career, and consider the implications of this interconnectivity relative to designing for teacher learning in professional

developments focused on social emotional development. I will be collaborating with Ben, Sona, and Michelle Shedro to submit this piece to either *Teaching and Teacher Education* or the *Journal of Teacher Education*.

These three articles share a focus on the importance of creating space for authentic interaction concerning emotion in learning environments, and ultimately argue that attending to emotion is a key feature of equity-oriented teaching and learning. In examining the role of emotion in equity-oriented teaching and learning, I chose to focus my investigation in three locations that are central to my scholarly work: children and play; teacher education; and SEL. As a former early childhood teacher, I learned that I was a much more effective, kind, and humane educator when I embedded myself in children's process of learning through play, rather than dragging them into my structure for learning. This enabled me to form stronger relationships with my students, to get to know them in their chosen context, and to begin to understand the power of learning and emotional connection with young children in play. As a scholar, I began my studies looking at SEL and the broader role of emotion in learning and in teacher education. This dissertation study represents the merging of these different pathways into a focused exploration of the role of emotion in equity-oriented teaching in three contexts: in the field of SEL, with elementary school-aged children through play, and with practicing teachers.

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ARTICLE ONE

Toward an Expansive Approach to Social Emotional Learning: Considering the Role of Emotion in Equity-Oriented Teaching and Learning

Emily Claire Price

Much U.S. educational reform over the last two decades has focused on preparing students to compete in the global economy. As a result, students' school days have become increasingly uniform in their emphasis on relaying disciplinary knowledge and academic skills (McGuinn, 2006). This narrowing and standardization of the curriculum construes learning as a solely cognitive process occurring within individuals (Bickman, 2001). However, recent research in education, psychology, and neuroscience has emphasized the social and emotional aspects of learning, positing that the process of learning does not occur in isolation, nor is it a purely cognitive or rational process (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Madrid, Fernie & Kantor, 2015). Instead, learning is a dynamic, embodied process which occurs in and through interaction with others (Diaz & Flores, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978).

The growth of social emotional learning (SEL) programming over the last twenty years has provided a much-needed means of attending to students' emotional well-being during school days that are increasingly dedicated to the acquisition of measurable, academic skills. However, consistent with the framing of learning as a cognitive act that occurs within individuals, the most popular approaches to SEL place their primary emphasis on developing individual students' ability to identify, manage, and regulate their own emotions. While recognizing and managing emotions are important skills, they do not sufficiently address students' emotional well-being in and of themselves. Rather, a comprehensive approach to SEL must also include attention to the social, cultural, and historical conditions that shape students' lives, including their emotions and relationships. This expanded approach to SEL is particularly important for equity-oriented

approaches to teaching and learning, which seek to transform, rather than reproduce, hierarchical power dynamics along lines of race, class, and gender.

In this article, I respond to two related questions: How can sociocultural theories of learning be used to organize a more expansive approach to SEL? and What are the implications for how we design for equity-oriented teaching and learning? In attending to these queries, I review the development of the field of SEL and its current framing across five core competencies. I then summarize and organize the critiques of its framework and application levied by educational researchers and practitioners into three categories, calling attention to the ways in which each of these categories highlight an underlying concern with the cognitivist model of learning that the competencies and their associated skills implicitly build on. Next, I propose moving to a model of SEL that operates from a sociocultural model of learning, thereby creating the conditions for investigations of identity and structures of inequity *and* the identification and management of emotional responses. I explicate three proposed domains of an expanded approach to SEL, as well as provide examples of what they look like in practice. Finally, I close with a discussion of the design implications for how we, as teachers and educational practitioners, can undertake an expanded approach to SEL, and how this contributes to the goal of equity-oriented teaching and learning.

In arguing for an expanded approach to SEL, my intention is not to reject the existing model, but rather, to situate it within a particular historical moment in educational reform, and explore how we can expand on this model in the current historical and political moment. The emphasis on individual skills in the existing framework was arguably necessary for the movement to gain traction in the accountability era of school reform. However, now that SEL has garnered relatively broad support, in large part because of its positive impact on students'

academic achievement, I aim to contribute to a conversation about what the next steps for the field of SEL might be. Now that it is widely recognized that SEL is beneficial to students and therefore a worthwhile endeavor in schools, we, as SEL researchers and practitioners, have the opportunity to consider how we can move the field forward to better attend to issues of power and privilege and how they impact our sense of self, our understanding of others, and our relationships. Attending to the complex role of emotion in learning is incomplete without consideration of how social constructs such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability impact the way we move through the world, and SEL is primed to take the next step in reshaping itself to center this form of inquiry.

The Development of SEL

SEL is a relatively new term for a process that is arguably as old as formal schooling itself (Cohen, 1999; 2001). Understanding the nature of relationships between teacher, student, and subject matter has always been an important consideration in designing learning environments, and SEL constitutes one way of attending to the connections among teachers and students, as well as the role of emotion in learning. SEL “proper” is approximately twenty years old, emerging largely from the theory of multiple intelligences and emotional intelligence in the early to mid 1990s. Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences argued for a wider consideration of what intelligence is – specifically, that it extends beyond the skills and abilities typically assessed in schools. This was followed shortly thereafter by Daniel Goleman’s 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, widely credited as being one of two key originating texts in SEL, the second being *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators*, written in 1997 by Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Schwab-Stone and Shriver. Goleman’s text laid the groundwork for Elias et al.’s text,

which was the first to name SEL and propose a process for its use in school environments. Goleman's text put forth the argument for why social and emotional awareness is not only worthwhile but necessary for success in life, and Elias et al.'s text expanded this argument into a proposal for a process that develops social and emotional competence in educational settings, highlighting SEL's dual positioning as both a curricular domain and an academic field of study. The guidelines presented in the text are the culmination of a conversation begun at a 1994 meeting hosted by the Fetzer Institute¹, the result of which was the development of the term *social and emotional learning*, and the founding of the Collaborative of Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), developed with the goal of "establishing high quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning as an essential part of preschool through high school education" (casel.org).

SEL is the process through which children and adults develop the knowledge and skills that are necessary for attaining social emotional competence. Social emotional competence, or SEC, refers to the ability to understand, manage, and express the social emotional aspects of one's life "in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development" (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Schwab-Stone, & Shriver, 1997, p. 2). SEL, in other words, is the process of learning and developing social emotional competence. Social emotional competence is almost universally discussed in the literature in terms of five competence domains originally proposed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL): self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The first two domains are self-

¹ A non-profit private operating foundation based in Kalamazoo, Michigan that initiates partnerships with institutions and individuals who are actively working to promote the research and development of "a spiritual foundation for a loving world" (fetzer.org).

oriented, focusing on one's understanding and management of their own emotions while the second two domains are externally oriented, aimed at understanding and relating to others. The final domain, responsible decision-making, is believed to carry across the other four domains, able to be exhibited and practiced in each.

Competence in the first self-oriented domain, *self-awareness*, refers to understanding one's emotions, personal goals, and values. The second self-oriented domain, *self-management*, shifts the focus from understanding one's feelings and beliefs to the expression and management of them. Specifically, self-management refers to the ability to regulate emotions and behavior. Competence in the first externally-oriented domain, *social awareness*, refers to the ability to empathize, feel compassion, take the perspectives of others with different backgrounds or cultures, and to understand social norms for behavior. Like the self-awareness domain, the social awareness domain focuses on understanding, whereas the second externally oriented domain, *relationship skills*, focuses on the behavior that stems from that understanding, like the self-management category. Specifically, relationship skills reference the tools needed to establish and maintain healthy and sustainable relationships, and to act in a manner consistent with social norms. The final domain, *responsible decision making*, pertains to both the self and externally oriented domains, and refers to the ability to make "constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse settings" (Weissberg et al., 2015, p. 7). Collectively, these domains were developed to recognize the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that constitute interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive competence. It is also worth noting that these domains are interrelated, and comprise cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies (Weissberg et al., 2015). These competencies have remained remarkably consistent since their development by CASEL in the early years of SEL, and are represented in the vast majority of the SEL programs

on the market, though different programs may emphasize one or more of these competencies or a skillset within them.²

School-based SEL programs are largely developed for a specific developmental period, such as early childhood, elementary, middle, or high school. Further, the majority of SEL programs on the market are universal programs, meaning that they are directed to the whole class and are aimed at reaching students who have not demonstrated the need for directed support related to a psychological or behavioral condition or a traumatic experience. While there are programs for both adults who work with children and for students who have demonstrated the need for additional behavioral or emotional support, these targeted programs are much less prevalent than the universal programs designed for classroom level interventions (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

In addition to the different audiences and environments for which SEL programs are designed, there are different pedagogical approaches which guide the programs. The mode of infusion, or the way in which programmatic efforts are integrated into the curriculum, can be thought of as occurring along a spectrum. On one end of the spectrum are programs that are directed, detailed, and serve as a stand-alone course of study. These programs are the most widely adopted, perhaps in part because of how compatible they are with the typical organization of the school day, where a set amount of time is dedicated to each subject. These highly structured programs, such as *I Can Problem Solve*, utilize daily or weekly lessons that are designed to fit into a short period of time (Rooney, Poe, Drescher, & Frantz, 1993; Shure, 1992).

²Prior to this time, programs did not use a common language, but still largely reflected similar ideals. For example, Cohen, in his 2001 review of programs on the market, identified eight overlapping sets of social emotional skills, which align with what CASEL distilled into five competencies: awareness of self and others; emotional self-regulation; communication; self-motivation; problem-solving and decision-making; collaboration; and the formation of a more realistic, positive sense of self (Cohen, 2001).

Somewhere along the middle of the spectrum there are programs that present a point of view about learning, development, and discipline that can be integrated into all facets of school life through a variety of methods. These programs, such as the *Responsive Classroom*, typically include a combination of teacher training aimed at developing positive classroom climates through language, modeling, organization of space, and restorative approaches to behavior management, and the incorporation of daily classroom routines such as morning meeting (Abry, Rimm-Kaufman, Larsen, & Brewer, 2013; Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007; Rimm-Kaufman, Fan, Chiu, & You, 2007). At the other end of the spectrum are programs that provide ways of thinking about how we can promote social emotional capacities without a formal structure. These programs are predominantly directed at improving interactions and relationships in classrooms by encouraging teachers to reflect on the language, norms, and routines in place and the implicit messages they send about what is prioritized in the space (Cohen, 2001; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2007).

Since its inception, the field of SEL has experienced rapid and sustained growth. Not surprisingly, there has been corresponding growth in research dedicated to investigating the efficacy of interventions to promote SEL (Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Heffer, 2013). Often, these studies are program-specific, as individual programs seek to make their approach known in what is rapidly becoming a saturated market, and gain approval from the closest thing the field has to a governing board, CASEL (Aber, Jones, Brown, Chaudry & Samples, 1998; Abry, Rimm-Kaufman, Larsen & Brewer, 2013; Brown, Roderick, Lantieri & Aber, 1994; Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007; Rimm-Kaufman, Fan & Chiu, 2007; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014). A challenge to these program-specific investigations is the difficulty they present for comparison or cross-case analysis, in large part because of the widely variant assessment tools and measurement outcomes

they use (Denham, Ji & Hamre, 2010; Hughes & Sullivan, 1998). More recently however, large-scale analyses of the effects of exposure to SEL programs have been conducted, most notably by Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Weissberg and Schellinger in 2011. While this meta-analysis highlighted the wide variation in effects across classrooms (a finding that is echoed in many program-level investigations), they also found significant positive effect sizes across multiple outcomes. Across 213 school-based, universal SEL programs for K-12 students, the authors found that students demonstrated enhanced social emotional skills, attitudes, and positive social behaviors, as well as fewer conduct problems, lowered levels of emotional distress, and increased academic performance. This meta-analysis has been cited widely, and its findings have been used to justify the expansion and application of SEL programs to a larger population of students.

The lack of a consistent and reliable measure of assessment has proved problematic for cross-case analysis and it calls attention to two additional issues associated with measurement in SEL – how to quantitatively measure social and emotional development, and the tendency to characterize a program as successful (or not) based on individual students’ academic achievement. To the first point, existing assessments are designed for and best suited to individual assessment in the context of a clinical evaluation, which places an emphasis on individual skills absent of context, negating the relational element of SEL. Furthermore, currently available individual assessments are able to assess SEL execution or comprehension but not both at the same time (McKown, 2015). Second, the primary way SEL skills are currently measured is with regard to their impact on student achievement. Not only is this a correlational rather than causal relationship, but it also conveys the message that social and emotional learning and development is not important for its own sake, but is a viable practice

because of its impact on academic achievement (Elias, 2009; McKown, 2015; Redding & Walberg, 2015).

Illuminating Tensions and Room for Growth

Following its recent twentieth anniversary, some scholars in the field of SEL have begun to reflect on the original intentions of the movement, carefully noting inconsistencies and tensions between the originating principles and its popular understanding and current applications. These critiques not only originate from researchers in the field of SEL, but have also emerged from scholars in the larger realm of educational research, educational practitioners and administrators, and journalists in popular media. Broadly, these critiques highlight the tensions between SEL's foundational theories, which speak to the necessity of collaboration, community, and relationships in school settings, and the way it is most commonly being practiced, which places the emphasis on the attainment of individual skills valued by the dominant culture which can be measured and quantified. These critiques can be synthesized into three broad categories which I will explicate separately: the prioritization of individual skill development over relationships and community building; the assumption of a 'generic' student, not impacted by culture, context, or circumstance; and the potential use of SEL as a means of controlling students' emotions and behaviors (Hecht & Shin, 2015; Hoffman, 2009; McLaughlin, 2008; Vadeboncoeur & Collie, 2013; Williford & Wolcott, 2015). After attending to each of these categories individually, I will discuss their commonalities, as well as the implicit and explicit learning theories they draw from.

The Prioritization of Individual Skill Development Over Community Building

SEL has primarily gained traction as a viable school-based practice because of its compatibility with the current educational reform climate, one that accepts a narrow view of the

purpose of schooling as preparation for competition in the global economy. This more restrictive view emphasizes individual student academic achievement through an increased focus on accountability, standardization, and measurement (McGuinn, 2006; Spring, 2014). References to SEL in educational policy, research studies, and promotional materials for individual programs overwhelmingly adhere to this prioritization, presenting the primary purpose of incorporating SEL into schools and classrooms in terms of its positive impacts on students' academic achievement (Elias, 2009; Zaslow, Mackintosh, Mancoll & Mandall, 2015).

While the emphasis on individual mastery of social skills and academic achievement gains was arguably a necessary tactic for survival in the educational reform climate of the time, it also represented a departure from the movement's somewhat more holistic original intentions. Diane Hoffman (2009) discusses the misalignment between programmatic language and practice, stating, "Despite a rhetoric of caring and holistic values such as community and democracy, when the focus is ultimately on skills, measurement, and results, there is a chance that the less quantifiable and perhaps more genuine aspects of emotionality in schooling that inhere in human relationships may be neglected" (540). Here, Hoffman calls attention to the conflict between the framing of SEL in community-oriented terms – indeed, two of the five core competencies are named for these skills specifically: social awareness and relationship building – and its practice, which reveals a different, individually focused, prioritization.

I contend that SEL needs to return to its roots in relationship and community. First, SEL has already gained the political traction and educator following necessary to assert itself as a viable curricular domain on its own merits; it no longer needs to tie itself to claims of its positive impact on students' academic achievement to maintain its existence. Additionally, and more importantly, the current framing does not honor the realities of children's lived experiences or

their learning process. Children come to understand who they are in relation to a larger world through their encounters with others within it (James, 1993; Paley, 1979; 1984; 2004). When we diminish the relevance of relationship and interaction for a child's developing sense of their own and others' social identities, children are left to make sense of difference with the tools available. These tools, including books, movies, other popular media, and adults in the students' immediate lives, also often do not explicitly discuss difference in areas such as race, religion, and gender, leaving children to piece together what difference in these areas means, picking up on embedded messages about what is valued and what is not. Children apply this acquired knowledge to their understanding of not only who they are and who they can be, but also to who others are and what they are capable of (Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Nasir & Cooks, 2009; Nasir, 2012). I argue that while this is always important to attend to, it is especially pertinent in the current political climate, where we have witnessed an increase in school and community based hate crimes towards individuals affiliated with targeted racial, sexual, and religious groups over the past year, and non-dominant students are increasingly concerned about their place in this country (<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/hate-incidents>). Returning to SEL's roots in privileging relationships and community not only honors children's learning processes, but also positions them as agentic beings that are both aware of the import of difference in structuring systems of power and capable of exploring, questioning, and dismantling the institutionalized prejudices that these systems are built on (Castañeda, 2002; Edelman, 2004; James, 2009; 2012; Muñoz, 2009; Stockton, 2009; 2016).

The Assumption of an Acultural, Generic Student

In addition to the prioritization of individual measurable skills over community driven goals, the second and most prevalent critique of SEL is its characterization of the student.

Specifically, both the framework of SEL in its core competencies, and its practice as represented in the majority of programs on the market, presume an acultural learner, absent of race, religion, class or any social constructs that might impact how they move through the world (Hecht & Shin, 2015; Hoffman, 2009; Vadeboncoeur, 2013). The approach is largely colorblind, and its lack of acknowledgement of the role of power and privilege with respect to difference serves only to reinforce the norms of the dominant culture. For example, SEL tends to position Western (specifically white, middle class) views on emotion as universally desirable, when studies of emotion have shown that norms regarding emotional experience, expression, and regulation are highly dependent on culture. What it means to be emotionally competent differs by culture. As Hoffman states, “Not all cultures interpret emotional experience in the same way, nor do they assign the same kinds of regulatory or expressive responses (such as talk) commonly shared by the White, American middle class” (p. 540). For example, competency in the self-awareness domain “involves understanding one’s emotions, personal goals, and values. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations, having positive mindsets, and possessing a well-grounded sense of self-efficacy and optimism” (Weissberg et al., 2015, p. 6). In addition to the lack of mention of how social constructs such as race, class, religion, gender, or sexuality impact the way one moves in and through the world, this definition of self-awareness also presents positivity and optimism as universally desirable mindsets. The notion that one should be consistently striving to maintain a positive mindset and remain optimistic is potentially dangerous, particularly for individuals in non-dominant social groups. When confronted with unjust or inequitable circumstances, it is both warranted and reasonable to address that situation with frustration, disappointment, or anger. Teaching students that one should stay positive and optimistic when they are witness to or impacted by injustice or prejudice may be harmful or

injurious to students. It encourages bystanders to ignore what they are witness to in favor of maintaining optimism through distance, and puts the onus on the individual who is experiencing or witnessing injustice to accept it and adjust their emotional response. In order to advance a version of SEL that is responsive to students' lived realities and experiences, it is essential that we acknowledge the ways in which we are all differentially positioned in society, and promote emotional expression that is culturally responsive, socially responsible, and aimed at uncovering systems of oppression and injustice

(https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2018/05/Aspen-Institute_Framing-Doc_Call-to-Action.pdf).

SEL as a Means of Behavior Management and Emotional Manipulation

Finally, the third category of SEL critiques surrounds its potential use as a means of controlling students' behavior and manipulating their emotions, particularly those students whose backgrounds, experiences, or cultures do not align with the behaviors labeled desirable or appropriate in classrooms typically dominated by white, middle class norms and values (Crede, 2016; Goodman, 2016; Vadeboncoeur, 2013). SEL creates space for teachers and adults, uncertain how to handle a student's means of expressing their emotion that is unfamiliar to them, to label it as an issue of lacking the core competency of self-management or of intentional misbehavior. In the first case, this can lead to remediation intended to teach students the "correct" way to express their emotions, and in the second, it can lead to punitive practices such as time-outs and removal of students from classrooms (Hoffman, 2009). In both cases, the real issue of valuing different approaches to expressing and managing emotion is ignored, and students from non-dominant backgrounds are disproportionately penalized compared to their white peers (Nance, 2016). Under the guise of building a caring classroom community, this

critique brings attention to the ways in which SEL can be co-opted to control and manage students' bodies, emotions, behaviors, and interactions.

Implicit Theories of Learning

Each of the three categories of critique highlights a perceived disconnect between the current practices promoted in SEL curricula and the original founding principles of the SEL movement. In addition to illuminating possible areas of growth for the field, these tensions also provide insight into a currently unanswered question necessary for progress: What is the theory of learning that SEL is predicated upon? While the goals and aims of SEL are straightforward and clearly articulated, the theory of learning that the domain utilizes is unstated. However, the disciplines that it draws from, its organization around the five core competencies, and the pedagogical practices that it promotes all provide clues as to how the field conceptualizes what learning is and how it occurs.

I propose that SEL's approach is consistent with the epistemological and ontological assumptions of behaviorist and cognitivist theories of learning. Stemming from the concept of operant conditioning, behaviorist theory asserts that the learning process is characterized by observable changes in behavior in response to stimuli. In this view, knowledge is objective and exists outside of people. In cognitivism, changes in behavior are observed, but serve as an indicator of what is going on in the learner's head, rather than merely as a response to a stimulus. Cognitive theorists assert that people process the information they receive and relate it to what they already know. In this view, learning is not just a change in behavior as it is in behaviorist theory, but is a change in knowledge stored in an individual's memory (Cobb & Bowers, 1999; Cobb, 2005; Fosnot & Perry, 2005).

The influence of behaviorism and cognitivism on SEL is evident in both its curricular scope and design, as well as in the practices it promotes. For example, one of the primary goals of SEL is to teach students to express emotion in socially acceptable ways. This is approached through individual skill development that gradually increases in complexity as the student ages. In stand-alone SEL curricula in particular, we see behaviorist principles in the use of didactic models of instruction, where objective skills and techniques are presented by the teacher to be reproduced by the student, as well as in the emphasis on repetitive practice and drills, and the inclusion of rewards and incentives for participation or changes in behavior. Additionally, the absence of any explicit mention of identity or examination of how we are constructed in relation to our cultural, social, and historical contexts in either of the two internally focused competencies is further evidence of how the perspective underlying the current framing of SEL is a product of the dominant discourse in psychology that views learning as a purely cognitive function. We see cognitivism in the organization of SEL across five core competencies, as well as in the view of learning as a reorganization of experiences through changing old behaviors and attaining new insights. Operating in tandem, behaviorism and constructivism influence an approach to SEL that is focused on the individual student and their attainment of pre-determined social and emotional skills.

An Expansive Approach to SEL

Even though SEL does not have a clearly stated theory of learning guiding its approach, its practices and organization reflect an implicit view of learning that is consistent with cognitivism, and adopts practices aligned with behaviorist theory. I argue that in order for the field to move in a more critical direction, it needs to adopt and clearly articulate a theory of learning that is aligned with the sociocultural, rather than the cognitivist, tradition. In the

following sections, I outline the fundamental premises of a sociocultural approach to learning, apply that view of learning to the current five competency model, and finally, propose a new three domain framework for organizing an expanded approach to SEL.

Adopting a Sociocultural Theory of Learning

Relevant to SEL, moving from a constructivist theory of learning to a sociocultural one requires a shift in where one locates the learning process, as well as how one views the relationship between identity and learning, and the relevance of cultural artifacts in mediating learning. A fundamental premise of a sociocultural approach to learning is that it is situated, occurring within cultural, institutional, and historical contexts (Schoen, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). People learn as they participate in the cultural practices and circumstances of their changing communities (Cole, 1992; Rogoff, 2003). In this view, knowledge is dynamic, as are the interrelated processes of learning and identity development. Learning and identity operate “simultaneously as individual processes that involve agency and personal sense-making and as social processes deeply influenced by social context, norms, and interactions with others in learning settings” (Nasir, 2012, p. 2). A final key element of a sociocultural theory of learning that is relevant to the development of a critical approach to SEL is the central role of mediation. Mediation refers to the idea that all human action is organized through tools or signs (Wertsch, 1991; Cole & Wertsch, 1996). From a sociocultural perspective, language is the mediational tool par excellence. However, what is most important is not the tools in and of themselves, but how they can transform people’s activities. Wertsch (1991) states, “The incorporation of mediational means does not simply facilitate action that could have occurred without them; instead, as Vygotsky (1981) noted, ‘by being included in the process of behavior, the psychological tool alters the entire flow of and structure of mental functions’” (p. 137). Any sociocultural analysis

thus needs to attend carefully to the kinds of mediational tools available in a setting, how people use them, and how their use transforms their activity. Learning then, from a sociocultural perspective, effects changes in not only what a person can do in an activity with respect to their developing skills, but also their sense of who they can be in relation to an activity.

Nasir and Cooks (2009) take this sociocultural approach in their analysis of learning on a track and field team. As they argue, the different types of mediational tools – what they call ideational, material, and relational resources – offered on the team shaped what team players were able to learn in terms of the skills required of successful hurdlers and how connected the team members felt to the coach and other members of the team. Material resources refer to the way the physical environment, its organization, and the artifacts support one's sense of connection to the practice. What their analysis highlighted was that the mediational tools that we offer in learning environments are not always equal across learners and this has significant effects on learners' sense of belonging to a community. To summarize, taking a sociocultural lens over a cognitivist one moves the location of learning from the individual to the social, and places an emphasis on the role of identity in learning. Additionally, it acknowledges the role of cultural artifacts in shaping learning. With respect to SEL, this creates not only the space, but the need to attend to issues of identity and culture, whereas the cognitivist framing of self-awareness prioritizes internal elements of self over social constructs, such as understanding one's strengths and weaknesses and recognizing one's emotions. To compare, a sociocultural framing would encourage both the recognition of one's emotions, and an exploration of the social, cultural, and historical conditions which have created them.

Furthermore, a shift from an implicit cognitive perspective to an explicit sociocultural theory of learning in the framing of SEL addresses each of the three categories of critiques of

SEL that were discussed in the previous section. The first critique addressed the discrepancy between the language of community and relationships in SEL literature and the emphasis on individual skill development in its practice. A sociocultural perspective locates learning within social processes, which would better align with a shift towards developing social emotional skills in and through relationship as opposed to its current framing as a process of developing individual cognitive skills. The second set of critiques of SEL centered on the presentation of the learner as acultural and absent of race, religion, class, or any social constructs that might impact the way they move through the world. The view that learning is socially, culturally, and historically mediated is central to sociocultural theory. The use of a sociocultural perspective on learning would thus enable an approach to SEL that does not ignore difference, but instead is culturally responsive and aimed at investigating the power and privilege afforded to different social groups. Similarly, the third set of critiques addressed the potential use of SEL as a means of controlling student behavior, particularly students whose backgrounds are distinct from the white, middle-class experience that many SEL programs are anticipating in the behaviors, skills, and values they promote. A sociocultural perspective situates learning and identity as interrelated processes, and would present an opportunity for centering different cultural ways of knowing, being, and interacting in the world.

Revisiting the Core Competency Model

SEL programs, literature, and research almost exclusively adhere to the framing of the goals of SEL into five core competencies. As described in the section on SEL, the first two competencies, self-awareness and self-management, are internally oriented, encouraging understanding of one's own emotions and the ability to control them. In its current framing, self-awareness is defined as understanding one's emotions, personal goals, and values, and the

abilities associated with this competency include: Accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations; having positive mindsets; possessing a well-grounded sense of efficacy and optimism; and recognizing how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected (Weissberg et al. 2015). Notably absent from this definition and its abilities is any mention of identity, social constructs, culture – ultimately, a sense of who one is in relation to others and the larger world.

Drawing from sociocultural theory, I argue that an exploration of one's emotions, personal goals, and values is not only an incomplete analysis of self-awareness, but is impossible to complete without attending to the ways in which our identity and the ways in which we are positioned in a social world impact our emotions, goals, and values. I contend that an expansive approach to self-awareness must include an associated ability focused on developing awareness of social constructs of identity and associated privileges. Additionally, I suggest a removal of the “having positive mindsets” ability, arguing that there are instances in which positivity is not appropriate to the circumstances, particularly around issues of inequity or oppression. Forcing a positive outlook is an example of the type of emotional manipulation that critics of SEL have written about. In the same vein, I suggest revising the ability to “possess a well-grounded sense of efficacy and optimism” to the critically aligned ability to “possess a well-grounded sense of efficacy and agency”, placing the emphasis not on optimism regardless of circumstance, but on the ability to recognize one's emotions as valid and make decisions about how to act in accordance with them and one's values and beliefs.

I summarize these proposed changes to the self-awareness competency with the proposed changes to the self-management competency in Table 1 below. In this category, I have not removed any of the associated abilities, but have altered three of the four to narrow the context to which they apply. For example, one of the original abilities associated with self-management is

“persevering through challenges in order to achieve personal and educational goals.” While perseverance is arguably a worthwhile quality, I contend that it can also be dangerous to teach students to persevere regardless of what is being asked and why. Similar to the arguments surrounding grit, I am concerned that this framing places the onus on the individual regardless of their social positioning, and allows for the unchecked promotion of meritocratic values (Crede, 2016; Goodman, 2016). I argue for a more nuanced view in an expansive framing of SEL, where perseverance is valued insofar as it helps one achieve a goal that the individual has helped to construct, and allows space for the evaluation of the role of privilege, power, access, and opportunity in achieving said goal. In this vein, it promotes the continual evaluation of the goal and the means to attain it, allowing for the possibility of revision. In short, it pushes back against the belief that pursuing a goal regardless of its cost to one’s physical, psychological, or emotional well-being is always a positive action. I revise this ability to read “persevering through challenges or moving on with one’s own goals and well-being in mind.” Please see Table 1 below for a list of the current associated abilities and the revised critical abilities that I propose for self-awareness and self-management.

Table 1. Current and revised associated abilities in the self-competencies.

Self-Awareness	
Accepted Definition: Understanding one’s emotions, personal goals, and values	
Associated Abilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations • Having positive mindsets • Possessing a well-grounded sense of efficacy and optimism • Recognizing how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected 	Revised Associated Expansive Abilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations • Accurately identifying one’s feelings and emotions • Possessing a well-grounded sense of efficacy and agency • Recognizing how thoughts, feelings and actions are interconnected • Awareness of external identity constructs and associated privileges • Awareness of one’s values, beliefs,

	purpose, etc.
Self-Management	
Accepted Definition: Skills and attitudes that facilitate the ability to regulate emotions and behaviors	
Associated Abilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delaying gratification • Managing stress • Controlling impulses • Persevering through challenges in order to achieve personal and educational goals 	Revised Associated Expansive Abilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delaying gratification when one is working towards the pursuit of a larger goal • Managing stress • Controlling impulses that would negatively impact self or others • Persevering through challenges or moving on with one’s own goals and well-being in mind • Demonstrating forgiveness, love, and care for self

As I will explain in greater detail in the following section, these proposed revised critical abilities are not, in and of themselves, an adequate framing of a critical approach to SEL. A truly expansive approach to SEL requires the revision of not only the definition and the abilities associated with each of the five competencies as they stand, but a rethinking of the use of five competency framework at all. As argued in the previous section, this is because the current framing reflects an implicit view of learning that is aligned with cognitivist theories of learning wherein learning is framed as predominantly an individual and internal process (Nasir, 2012; Schoen, 2011; Vadeboncoeur, Velloso, & Goessling, 2011). Before I argue for a different organization that is better aligned with a sociocultural approach to equity, I will present my revisions for a more critically oriented approach to the social competencies as they currently stand in Table 2 below. Again, these are not enough on their own to substantiate an expansive approach to SEL, but rather, they are meant to serve as an example of the transitional thinking we might consider in looking at what is missing from the current framework and how we might use sociocultural theory to move SEL in a more critical, equity-oriented direction.

Table 2. Current and revised associated abilities in the social competencies.

Social Awareness	
Accepted Definition: The ability to empathize and take others' perspectives, and recognize and mobilize diverse and available supports.	
Associated Abilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking the perspective of those with different backgrounds or cultures • Empathizing and feeling compassion • Understanding social norms for behavior • Recognizing family, school, and community resources and support 	Revised Associated Expansive Abilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing awareness of perspectives of those with a background or culture different from one's own • Empathizing and feeling compassion • Understanding social norms for behavior in different locations and situations • Developing awareness of power and privilege related to constructs of identity • Advocating for others
Relationship Skills	
Accepted Definition: The tools needed to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships, and to act in accordance with social norms	
Associated Abilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating clearly • Listening actively • Cooperating • Resisting inappropriate social pressure • Negotiating conflict constructively • Seeking help when it is needed 	Revised Associated Expansive Abilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating clearly • Listening actively • Cooperating • Advocating for self • Negotiating conflict constructively • Seeking help when needed

Proposing a Three Domain Framework for an Expansive Approach to SEL

In this section, I propose a framework for an approach to SEL that translates the calls for a critical framing from the realm of theory to the realm of practice. I structure this expansive approach to SEL across three domains, developed with the following goals in mind: to account for the three broad categories of critiques of SEL from researchers in the field; to attend to the directed calls for a revised approach addressed in conjunction with the critiques when available;

to maintain a format similar to the current organization of SEL into five core competencies for ease of transition; and to use a sociocultural theory of learning and identity to expand the current framing of self and social to include recognition of the ways in which our identity and relationships are influenced by social, cultural, and historical contexts. The three proposed domains of a critical approach to SEL are: *identity and self*; *the other in relationship*; and *humanizing structures of management and organization*. In the following paragraphs, I will explicate each of these domains in greater detail, identifying how they relate to both the original goals of SEL and the current five competency framework, how they address the critiques and calls for an expanded, critical framing, and finally, how they utilize a sociocultural perspective to achieve a critical view of identity and an equity-oriented approach to learning.

Identity and self. The first domain, *identity and self*, attends to SEL's goal of developing the ability to understand and express oneself. It is aligned most clearly with the first core competency, self-awareness, but also attends to elements of self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. In this regard, the three-domain framework I am proposing mirrors that of the original five competency structure; the domains, like the competencies, are interrelated and are mutually supportive. Their separation in a framework is not meant to signal that it is necessary or even desirable to teach or analyze them in isolation; rather, it is meant to serve as a means of identifying and accounting for the constituting elements of an expansive approach to SEL. It is assumed that an interaction where critical SEL is being demonstrated will draw on more than one domain, as it is assumed in the original framing that more than one competency will be developed in an instructional moment or lesson. For example, in the original framing, responsible decision-making is designed to be incorporated or evident in all four of the other competency arenas.

As stated, the proposed self and identity domain aligns with the original framework in attending to the aim of self-understanding and self-expression, and is most clearly aligned with the self-awareness competency. However, where self-awareness is defined as understanding one's emotions, personal goals, and values, the expansive domain of self and identity extends the investigation into an exploration of identity and challenges individuals to question how their emotions, personal goals, and values are shaped by our social identities, as well as cultural and historical influences. While there is nothing inherently antithetical to an equity-oriented approach about identifying one's emotions, personal goals, and values, it is an incomplete analysis, as it does not consider how these were developed and influenced. The current SEL framing presupposes that our emotions, personal goals, and values are developed in internal isolation, without recognition of the ways in which they are socially, historically, and culturally constructed. This expansion of the self-awareness category uses a sociocultural framing of identity and learning to challenge the notion that one can be self-aware without active, purposeful and sustained reflection on one's own positionality. This framing maintains that it is not possible to truly know oneself without an awareness of how our views have been shaped by the experiences we have had in a particular body in a particular time and place. Largely, this stems from a recognition that the social identity categories one is associated with, and in particular those that one is physically marked by, such as race and gender, impact the way one moves in and through the world.

The expansive domain of self and identity attends to all three of the broad categories of critique surfaced by researchers in the field, but is most clearly a direct response to the second group of critiques focused on the framing of the student or learner – namely, that they are not situated in a particular historical, social, or cultural context and thus skills and abilities associated

with emotional expression, regulation, and management are universally applicable. The framing of identity as an amalgamation of how one is socially positioned in addition to recognition of characteristics unique to the individual makes this acultural approach to instruction difficult to defend. A sociocultural approach demands an evaluation of the ways in which “universally desirable” means of expressing or managing one’s emotions, for example, are in fact artifacts of the dominant culture and largely reflective of white, middle-class norms and values.

‘ **The other in relationship.** The second domain of a more expansive approach to SEL is *the other in relationship*, which attends most clearly to the two social competencies in the original framework, social awareness and relationship skills. This domain extends the analysis of self in the first domain to a consideration of how others are also uniquely positioned with respect to their social identities and the opportunity structures associated with them. Like the first domain, it bases its understanding of identity in sociocultural theory, and the critical focus demands an investigation into how different social groups are positioned with respect to their relationship to power and privilege. This domain continues a discussion of intersectionality present in the first domain, recognizing that one is not just raced, classed, or gendered, but is simultaneously all three (and more). One exists at the intersection of these identity markers.

This framing extends the scope of the original SEL competency of social awareness, defined as “the ability to empathize and take others’ perspectives, and to recognize and mobilize diverse and available supports.” Similar to the *identity and self* domain, the expansive domain of *the other in relationship* places an emphasis on the recognition of the other with whom one is expected to empathize as culturally, socially, and historically situated. To work towards understanding another’s perspective, one must first develop an awareness that others’ practices, beliefs, norms, and opportunity structures are impacted by a historical and cultural context that

may be different from one's own. Further, this domain emphasizes that even within a similar historical or cultural context, we are all uniquely positioned by social constructs of identity with respect to systems of privilege and oppression. While the first part of this proposed domain - *the other* - speaks most clearly to the critiques of the framing of the student in SEL as absent of culture or context, the second component of this domain - *in relationship* - additionally attends to the first set of critiques regarding the prioritization of individual skill development over relationships and community building. Further, the focus in an equity-oriented, expansive approach to SEL is on developing sustained meaningful relationships with others in community and across difference, whereas in the original framing, the development of "universal" social skills in both the social awareness and the relationship skills competencies were again enforced. Examples include a firm handshake upon greeting someone, and demonstrating respect by looking someone in the eye. Knowing that these skills are culturally specific, an expansive approach looks at the intention behind the action and encourages consideration of different forms of demonstrating the intention across cultures and contexts. Thus, rather than encouraging students to "act in accordance with social norms" an expansive approach encourages an examination of how norms are socially constructed, as well as how developing and maintaining relationships with others requires recognition of the ways in which we do not all adhere to the same cultural script or way of being.

Humanizing structures of management and organization. The final domain of a critical approach to SEL is *humanizing structures of management and organization*. This domain relates most clearly to the self-management core competency, as well as to SEL's use as a means of attending to behavior and classroom management. As described in the previous section, an expansive and equity-oriented approach to self-management would require an examination of

when persevering is in one's own best interests, and when the narrative of perseverance and grit is more clearly being operationalized as a means of ignoring systemic systems of oppression and placing blame on individuals for unmet goals over the institutions that create structures of privilege. In addition to including this equity-driven framing of self-management, this domain aims to recognize the ways in which SEL is framed as a means of reducing disruptions and problem behaviors in school contexts in particular. As discussed, SEL has largely been marketed as a means of improving academic achievement. One of the ways this is explained is through SEL's ability to reduce instances of disruptive behavior and thereby increase the amount of time spent on academic instruction. To varying degrees, SEL programs are presented as a form of behavior modification and classroom management. And SEL may reduce "disruptive" incidents in the classroom. However, disruptive displays are often a student's way of communicating that their needs are not being met – something is not working for them. If the students' physical, psychological, cognitive, social and emotional needs are being met, then it follows that less disruptions are likely to occur, as their communicative purpose is not longer necessary.

SEL has the capacity to attend to students' social and emotional needs, but when it is framed primarily as a means of behavior management, the emphasis shifts from understanding the cause of the emotion, encouraging its expression, and developing workable solutions, to simply quelling the offending behavior. In this scenario, SEL's goal of developing caring, responsive classroom environments is lost, and respect for open communication and diverse forms of expression is undermined by the desire for the appearance of a well-managed classroom. SEL's framing by some as a means of classroom management and as a form of behavior modification is concerning because this use is not represented in the core competencies, which largely reflect the goals and aims of the approach. Teachers may not be intentionally

silencing students, but may be looking for a means of creating the space for intellectual inquiry and academic growth to occur. My aim in developing this domain is to acknowledge that SEL is being adopted and used with the purpose of creating an organized classroom community. In making this aim explicit, we can look towards means of structuring classrooms that encourage both productivity and academic engagement as well as recognize students' diverse backgrounds, needs, and ways of being in community.

Designing for Equity-Oriented Teaching and Learning in SEL

How does this new way of thinking about, organizing, and framing SEL impact its practice? Additionally, how does this framework contribute to the aim of equity-oriented teaching and learning? Here I discuss how we might use the proposed framework as a tool for expanding SEL into the realm of educational practice. Specifically, I identify and describe four recommendations for those considering the use of an expansive approach to SEL in their classroom, emphasizing its contributions to the goal of equity-oriented teaching and learning.

1. Anticipate that the domains will overlap in practice.

Like in the core competency model, the three domains are meant to overlap in their use and practice. The domains are meant to serve as an organizational tool, indicating what an expansive approach to SEL includes. In practice, the domains will likely overlap, as real-life situations often require us to draw on skills from across domains. For example, in working collaboratively with a classmate on a partner project, a student necessarily brings their goals, values, and aims to bear on the project design and approach. In addition to the understanding that their goals and values are not universal but are socially constructed, these skills and understandings are situated under the first domain, *identity and self*. However, in working collaboratively, one must not only

demonstrate self-awareness, but also social awareness, including the knowledge that their partner will also be bringing their own values and goals to the collaborative project. Like their own, their partner's aims will be culturally, socially, and historically constructed. Additionally, a partner based project requires collaboration, which demands that the two students share and build upon their shared norms, develop compromises in the face of conflicting or contradictory goals or values, and negotiate roles that support each other's strengths, all of which are social skills and understandings contained within the second domain, *the other in relationship*. As this example highlights, authentic scenarios or interactions often require us to draw on skills and understandings across domains in the framework for an expansive approach to SEL. This is to be both expected and encouraged. At the same time, if your students are having difficulty with some component of the collaborative process, the domains can be a useful way to reflect on where they might benefit from additional practice.

2. Expansive SEL is best served by a holistic, embedded approach.

Emotion is inherent to the learning process, and serves a central role in the relationships and interactions that characterize daily classroom life for teachers and students. Put another way, emotion is located in social action, as it is demonstrated and performed within relationships among classroom teachers, students, administrators, and parents (Madrid, Fernie, & Kantor, 2015). As such, an expansive approach to SEL must also be holistically embedded into the rituals, routines, norms of communication, relationships, and interactions that collectively constitute classroom life. Expansive approaches to SEL are best served not by stand-alone curricula, but by programs on the other end of the spectrum of infusion, which are predominantly directed at improving interactions and relationships in classrooms by encouraging teachers to

reflect on the language, norms, and routines in place and the implicit messages they send about what is prioritized in the space (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). This approach honors the interconnectivity of emotion and cognition, the role of relationship and community in learning, and the importance of authentic interaction to developing SEL skills.

3. Design for diverse possibilities to emerge.

Emotional awareness and social skills are honed when children have opportunities to practice them in authentic interactions that emerge organically from situations that they are experiencing in the classroom, home, school, community, or larger world. When children practice social skills in isolation, they have difficulty applying the techniques they have learned to situations in context. However, this does not mean that teachers need to sit idly by and wait for an opportunity to present itself for SEL instruction. Rather, an expansive approach to SEL requires listening to the children. What social issues are students contending with? Are there ongoing tensions that the school or community is facing that impact students? What are the students saying, explicitly and implicitly? Use this information to strategically integrate – and create space for the emergence of - mediational tools that foster SEL.

In the early grades, fantasy play is a powerful means of learning both what issues children are contending with and how they are making sense of them. When play is child-initiated, it can serve as a space for teachers to observe and reflect on what issues children are working through in the themes chosen, as well as in the interactions occurring in the play scene (Edmiston, 2008; Paley, 2004; 2010). Additionally, teachers can embed themselves in the play to direct children's focus to key queries in the SEL realm that emerge organically, as well as develop play prompts for children to take up that are designed with critical questions in mind

(Ferholt, 2009; 2010). For example, when I was working with a group of predominantly Mexican and Mexican American children in the months leading up to and following the election of Donald Trump, many of the students expressed anger, frustration, sadness, and uncertainty about their and their family members' continued security in the country that has always been their home. To address this in a meaningful, developmentally appropriate way, I designed prompts that encouraged children to take up questions of belonging and otherness in ways that explicitly connected to the situation at hand, as well as through entry points that allowed them to maintain personal distance through popular media narratives (Price & Jurow, in press). With older students, personal narrative, testimonio, teatro, and other storying activities can also serve as a means of mediating students' SEL. Through both play and narrative, we as teachers can design for key questions and tensions in the SEL realm to emerge organically, and create space for exploration and sense-making in authentic interactions.

4. Be critical and reflective in the use of SEL as a means of classroom management.

One notable difference between the core competency model and the proposed equity-oriented, expansive framework is that the expansive approach explicitly incorporates a focus on the use of SEL as a means of organizing, structuring, and managing life in the classroom. In the core competency model, this use of SEL is not represented in its framework, despite the common expectation that the use of SEL curricula in classrooms will serve as a means of quelling individual student misbehavior (Vadeboncoeur & Collie, 2013; Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich & Gullota, 2015). Unfortunately, this reinforces the use of SEL as an individual, measurable, skills-based practice, rather than as a means of supporting emotional and social awareness and the development of a robust, supportive community of learners. As discussed in the section on

critiques and tensions in the current framing, this creates the possibility of adults attempting to manage students' behaviors, actions, thoughts, and movement in the name of SEL, which is a misrepresentation of its founding goals.

In the expansive framework, I aim to acknowledge SEL's use as a form of management and make this intention explicit. We cannot change what we don't acknowledge the existence of. At the same time, I also propose a change to the unit of analysis, or the question of what it is that is being managed. I suggest a deliberate shift from thinking about management as an issue of controlling individual behavior to looking at management as a system that operates at the level of the classroom. This places the emphasis on the features that are designed for and by community members to support the growth of the community and its individual members. This includes the routines, norms, systems, structures, and schedules that organize daily life in the classroom.

Conclusion

Emotion is central to the process of learning, and social emotional learning has made great strides with respect to finding acceptance in a school system that emphasizes the attainment of measurable, academic skills. Social emotional learning programs and practices are prevalent in classrooms and schools, particularly in early childhood and elementary classrooms, and they have widespread support among teachers, administrators, policymakers, and educational researchers. The support is warranted, considering that student-level outcomes following exposure to SEL programming include improved academic performance, an increase in positive social interactions, and a reduction in the number of disciplinary referrals or problem behaviors. SEL holds great promise for attending to the role of emotion in learning, but its current construction is inadequate. It does not serve all of our students equally, positioning normative

behaviors and practices as applicable or desirable to all rather than interrogating them in light of the social, cultural, and historical conditions which created them.

To move forward, we must acknowledge the unspoken – that SEL relies on a framing of learning that is cognitive over sociocultural, that the norms and behaviors it promotes largely represent white, middle-class preferences, and that our non-dominant students are particularly at risk of harm when we expect students to behave in ways that don't align with their cultural background. In this article, I have proposed a means of acknowledging and responding to the implicit elements of SEL. To attend to these issues, I argue for a move from a five-competency model rooted in cognitive theories of learning to a three-domain model rooted in sociocultural theories of learning, which create the conditions for explicit conversations about identity, equity, and the role of emotion in learning. This move represents an expanded understanding of what SEL can do and who it is for. It attends to critiques that highlight ways in which SEL's current framing limits its applicability to diverse audiences, and encourages an expanded view of what comprises identity. In proposing this model, I anticipate and welcome continued conversation about what this reframing affords, both practically and theoretically, as well as where it points to new areas for growth.

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ARTICLE TWO

On Belonging: Children Respond to Trump through Play and Imagination

Emily Claire Price & A. Susan Jurow

Donald Trump's words and actions have emboldened a new generation of racist, sexist, and xenophobic individuals to speak out without fear of being ostracized by the larger society, and to commit horrific acts of violence against people whose skin, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or ability does not align with the dominant group. His proposed policies attack the rights of nearly every group that is not white, male, Christian, and wealthy, and we have seen these attitudes and actions embodied in our schools as well. While the campaign and election of Donald Trump has led to dangerous levels of discriminatory language, actions, and policies in our society, systems of oppression and structures of privilege were not created during the campaign, but were granted a renewed legitimacy in its wake. Our ability to stratify and segregate, to conquer and to oppress, is inherent to the very fabric of our country; it is a part of our collective historical identity.

Although the stakes have greatly increased since the election, divisive rhetoric and prejudicial policies are not something new to American society, nor are they new to the children enrolled in the public schools that are tasked with preparing them to be full participants in this society.

Despite this, in our combined 30 years of teaching in early childhood and elementary classrooms, afterschool programs, and university-based teacher education courses leading up until the 2016 election, we have encountered educators, caregivers, administrators, and policymakers who did not feel it was necessary or appropriate to discuss issues of equity and identity with students in primary schools. This stance was informed by a number of assumptions, including, for example, the mistaken belief that we had already "solved" racism as well as the belief that attending to issues of equity is beyond the purpose of public education, which should concentrate on the transmission and acquisition of academic skills. The assumption that has

proved most pervasive in relegating critical discussions of power and privilege to the secondary domain, and the one that we centrally respond to in this paper, is the belief that children are largely unaware of issues of equity. Following from this, if we were to introduce these topics into the early childhood or elementary classroom, some argue that we would effectively be burdening our students with material that is neither developmentally appropriate or relevant to their lives.

In this article, we trace this assumption to the framing of children as innocent and our perceived societal need to preserve and protect that innocence. If we are to attend to issues of inequity that young students are contending with, we need to develop a view of children that does not position them as passive recipients of knowledge, but active constructors of it. We draw from childhood studies, feminist theories, and queer theories in contending that children are not only affected by inequalities in our larger society, but are actively working to make sense of them. We argue that one of the primary tasks of childhood is making sense of the often unspoken norms, hierarchies, and structures that characterize the adult world they have come to inhabit. In this regard, our argument goes beyond the contention that children are simply capable of attending to issues of equity. Although we agree that they are absolutely capable, we take the argument a step further in asserting that children *already are* contending with issues of equity, relative to their local community and context. To ignore this fact is to do a disservice to both the students themselves and to our larger society. As educators, we believe that we should be listening for, taking seriously, and attending to issues of equity that children are contending with, which will vary greatly depending on the local community and context. This positioning of children as agentic, empowered, full beings in their own right is a radical approach to teaching, as early childhood and elementary education traditionally positions children as recipients of knowledge, rather than as active constructors of it.

Although equity-oriented teaching has taken on a sense of urgency during this presidential term, we hold that its application extends beyond this immediate political moment, as examinations of power, privilege, and identity are central to a comprehensive public school experience. Our approach to equity-oriented teaching is radical in both its positioning of investigations of power as central to the learning process, and its focus on transformative action. Specifically, how we organize our teaching facilitates and advocates for the transformation of institutional practices over adaptation to them. It is our duty as educators to respond honestly to the issues all of our students are contending with, including our youngest ones. In this article, we aim to illuminate the critical role of play in exploring issues of equity with young children. We provide examples of how we designed for play-based explorations of privilege and power in a low-income afterschool program with majority Latino students in the months before, during, and after the election of Donald Trump. In examining the play that resulted, we describe how the children explored themes of identity and belonging as a means of interrogating, interrupting, and responding to Trump's characterizations of Mexicans in particular.

Introducing the Players and the Play

EPIC is an afterschool literacy, arts, and technology design club co-facilitated by the University of Colorado at Boulder's School of Education and Alicia Sanchez International Elementary School. In its eighth year, the club meets three days a week and offers free afterschool programming for children ages seven – 11. The club is dedicated to (1) improving the academic, social, and emotional learning opportunities for the elementary students, a significant percentage of whom are racial and ethnic minorities living in poverty; and (2) preparing a majority middle-class, white female population of pre-service teachers, with limited experience working with historically marginalized communities effectively (Cole & the Distributed Literacy

Consortium, 2006; Freeman & Jurow, in press). Pre-service teachers participate in the club as a requirement of a university course in which they are enrolled on theories of learning.

The demographics of the elementary students who attend the afterschool club reflect that of the general school population, with the exception that a growing percentage of Mexican-identifying students have opted into the club as it has continued to operate. Approximately 66% of the school's student population identify as Latinx, and over 80% of the students who attend our club do. Additionally, many of the students whom we serve are first or second generation immigrants. Although almost all of the student participants are fluent English speakers, many also speak Spanish with various degrees of fluency. Approximately 74% of students live in households experiencing high-poverty, making the population of the school unique from the school district it is a part of, which is largely affluent, white, and high-achieving as measured by standardized tests.

The first author is a white Ph.D. candidate whose teaching background is in urban early childhood education. She now works in teacher education at the university level, and works with the second author in designing, facilitating, and researching equity-oriented learning for both children and pre-service teachers at the afterschool program described in this article. She is the primary project designer and on-site coordinator. The second author is an Indian-American professor of Education and the Director of the EPIC afterschool club and teacher education program. As the Director, she is responsible for designing a university-school partnership that is mutually beneficial for all stakeholders, including the elementary students. She has designed curriculum units to support equity-oriented learning at the club and conducted research on children's and pre-service teachers' learning through club activities.

Engaging Inequities and Imagining More Equitable Futures through Play

In an effort to support culturally relevant and meaningful learning and teaching, we privilege play as a central means for engaging issues of equity at EPIC. Play is the language children speak to make sense of their world, and to begin to develop answers to questions about their role in it (Davies, 2003; Gallas, 1998; Lindqvist, 1995, 2001; Paley, 2010, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). When children are faced with a tension in their social order, or an upsetting event that they need to process, they turn to play as a way to work through problems and imagine new possibilities for themselves. We view play as a form of improvised storytelling, in which children develop characters, take on identities and roles, and experiment with multiple storylines and endings (Galman, 2017; Paley, 1984; Wohlwend, 2012, 2009). Children’s play includes both recurring and improvised elements that allow them to create imaginary worlds in which “new metaphors, new forms of social relations, and new patterns of power and desire are explored” (Davies, 2003, p. 167). At EPIC, we encourage children to play through familiar media narratives so that they can embody and feel the constraints of stereotypical characters, actions, and plot lines and improvise ways to play around these obstacles (Ferholt, 2009, 2010; Wohlwend, 2013). In this regard, play is not a means of escaping reality; rather, it is a means of making sense of it.

Our positioning of play as a form of equity-oriented learning has roots in an agentic framing of who children are, and what childhood is. The conception of children as human *beings* rather than human *becomings* is a fairly recent development (Corsaro, 2005; James, 2009). Prior to this, the predominant view was that children were worthy of study insofar as they were able to provide insight into adult life and specifically, the transition into adulthood (Christensen & James, 2008; Piaget, 1969; Woodhead, 2009; Woodhead & Faulkner 2008). Despite a shift in the

academic theorization of childhood, the dominant paradigm is still hugely influential in popular understanding and in practice (Casteñeda, 2010; James, 1993; Stockton, 2009).

One of the primary tasks of childhood is making sense of, problematizing, deconstructing, and reinventing the social norms and constructs of the adult world that children have come to inhabit, including the construction of their own existence as children. We theorize this process largely through *interpretive reproduction*, a term developed by Corsaro (2005) to capture both the innovative and creative aspects of children in society, as well as the idea that children are not simply internalizing society and culture, but are actively contributing to cultural production and change. Interpretive reproduction provides a means of theorizing children's social development as neither linear nor as an exact copy of existing structures, but rather, as a process of reproduction that includes children's contention with ambiguities, tensions, and difficulties, as well as their resolutions, reconstructions, and reinterpretations of existing norms and ways of being. In our analysis of how children's play mediates their equity-oriented explorations, we look at how interpretive reproduction is enacted through children's storytelling that is occurring inside the playworlds and structures we have designed.

Designing for Play-Based Explorations of Equity

At EPIC, we design semester-long theme-based units that promote the exploration of issues of equity with which students are actively contending. We invite children to play in fantasy worlds that raise current social injustices that students have indicated are of concern to them through conversation, writing, art, and play. With each theme, we develop both real-world and fantasy realm entry points and guiding questions that bridge these two domains.

In one unit, we drew on students' expertise in identifying the messages that Disney fairytales and their associated books, movies, toys, and other media products present to us about

who we are, what we can do, and who we can be. We sought to encourage students' critical awareness of implicit messages about race, gender, class, language, and other social constructs in books, movies, and in commercial products more broadly, and to see these texts as both pliable and revisable (Davies, 2003; Gallas, 1998; Wohlwend, 2012, 2009). We developed this particular project to help the children make sense of the negative narratives and messages that were circulating during Trump's campaign in the fall of 2016. We had heard the children voice strong emotional reactions and sharp intellectual critiques to Trump's portrayals of their communities and themselves with us - as Mexicans, as immigrants, as girls, as emergent bilinguals, as being or having undocumented family members. As part of how we approach curriculum design, we used the children's reactions as the basis for organizing a personally-meaningful context for play and exploration.

In designing all of our project units, we rely on a set of norms and routines that facilitate playful engagement with real world problems. In order for us to be able to play through issues of injustice in either real world or fantasy realms, we need to establish trust among the players. Towards this end, we incorporate time each day for informal conversations where adults are able to check in with individual children and get to know each other's interests and lives outside of school. Children have learned that this is a time when they can talk about their families and the struggles they may be facing due to a sibling's illness, a parent's loss of a job, or they may share about their friends and their plans for upcoming holidays. No topics are off-limits and all topics are viewed as ways of getting to appreciate the richness of the children's lives. These unscripted conversations are met with care, concern, and respect for the child and their experiences. They also provide the basis for curriculum design and responsiveness. Further, our emphasis on

relational trust establishes the groundwork for taking risks, exploring ideas, and generating new ways of approaching problems through play (Gee, 2007).

A key dimension of our approach to curriculum design is that we plan for emergence. When we design project arcs, we have a vision in mind for how we anticipate that the semester will progress. However, these projected arcs are exactly that - a projection. They are flexible and are constantly being renegotiated based on what children are bringing to us. Each week, we reflect on what issues the children are contending with in the real world, what activities or topics they are or are not engaging with in the fantasy realm, and the relationships developing between players, all of which inform how we design for the next week. The responsiveness of our designs is critical for attending to what is consequential to the children and their communities. The guiding questions and learning goals for each unit serve as a central guiding point, as a semester may end with a very different project than the one originally designed and anticipated. The capacity of our curriculum to shift as a result of the children's concerns and questions allows the club to become a space where children can solve meaningful problems together with the support of peers and adult collaborators.

Who Belongs, and Who Gets to Decide?

In the months leading up to Trump's election, issues of identity and belonging were consistent themes in the children's play. In play scenes representing both their current reality and imagined futures, children explored questions such as: Who belongs? Who gets to decide? And, what types of inclusion and exclusion are best for a community? As children of Mexican immigrants who were largely portrayed as a problem for the United States, belonging and deserving to belong in the country were central and consequential issues. In the following, we share two examples that illustrate how the children took up the question of who belongs through

collaborative play. The examples underscore how the children engaged with interpretive reproduction in order to make sense of the way they, their families, and their community were being positioned. They were selected because of how they illuminated the children's sustained interest in questions about what it means to belong and organize fair systems of inclusion/exclusion. As we show, the children were also using play to imagine and develop more inclusive and diverse futures.

“U.S. is the home of Mexicans too”

In a project on mural arts in the spring of 2016, children explored the purposes of murals, and developed group murals about issues of equity to which they wanted to bring awareness. In the early stages of the process when we were talking about and sketching initial ideas, an artistic, thoughtful, and energetic nine year-old male student named Camden developed two similar drawings. In the first, then-candidate Donald Trump was drawn speaking to a crowd and in the next, then-candidate Hillary Clinton was accepting the presidency (see Figures 1 and 2). There were elements of both fantasy and reality in the drawings in that they depicted a pressing and significant issue of equity that was directly impacting the individual student and his family, but also referenced an imagined future in which Clinton would win the election. In the first image, Donald Trump stands at a podium in a room with three rows of chairs, one window, and a door. His sharp eyebrows are pointed downward and he wears a scowl, with a speech bubble above his head that reads, “I want to be presint (president).” In the rows of seats, a single person stands with a scared look on their face, and responds “No Trump presint (president).” Written underneath the image are the words “Because Donald Trump doesn’t have freedom.” When Camden presented the image to a group of other children and Emily (the first author), he explained this statement further, saying that Trump does not believe everyone should have

freedom, and that Mexicans should leave (fieldnotes, 3/9/16). In the next image, Clinton appears in the same setting, standing at the same podium. Her eyes are wide and she has a large smile on her face, as does the sole audience member, who is saying, “You are presint.” The speech bubble above Clinton says, “Yaha” and the words underneath the image read “Because Hillary is going to give freedom to everybody.” In both images, the presidential candidates are drawn at twice the scale as the lone audience member, and are fully clothed, whereas the lone audience member is a fully anonymous, small scale stick figure. The style in which Camden depicted the characters in this imagined scene suggest that the candidates were more powerful than the audience member. Without a body, without a face, the sole audience member is speaking, but without the impression of great weight. This, we might interpret as see as representing the child’s feelings in light of the election process and the uncertainty of their future.

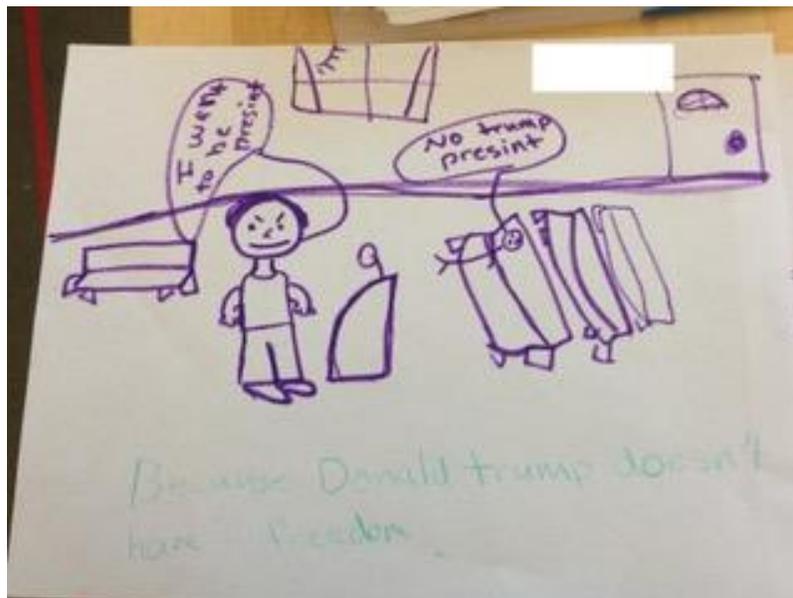


Figure 1. Child’s depiction of a campaign speech by then-candidate Donald Trump.



Figure 2. Child’s depiction of a presidential acceptance speech by then-candidate Hillary Clinton.

As one of the older and veteran members of the club, Camden had soon inspired a small group of children to act out what they would want to say to Donald Trump if they were in the depicted scene. In the play world created by Camden, the other children were able to act “as if” they could speak back to Trump, which supported them in constructing themselves as agentic and powerful (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998) . They tried out different approaches as different speakers with different concerns. One seven year-old stated with a generosity of heart, “He needs to learn.” His older cousin nodded and then, referencing the potential critical consequences to their lives said that, “he wants to send all us Mexicans back to Mexico.” They both began to chant quietly, “No Trump, No Trump.”

Referencing other forms of political resistance that the children had studied in addition to murals, Emily remarked that the chant sounded like something one would hear at a protest. This prompted some children to begin making actual signs to carry with them in the real world. One showed four stick figures holding hands with the word “freedom” beside it. Above them, the

word “Trump” was written in bright orange marker, with a circle around it and an X going through the middle. In another sign, Trump’s name was written in large green capital letters with a red circle around it and a red line across it. Surrounding the central image were American flags, hearts, stars, and words including “home,” “equality,” “bad,” and “good.” The image also incorporated phrases that they had used in their play, such as “he needs to learn” and “everyone has the same heart” (see Figure 3). Another group of children began writing a letter with bulleted ideas representing what they would want say to him, including “US is the home of Mexicans too” and “People have the same hart (heart).”



Figure 3. Child’s protest sign.

In this example, play was a direct response to a prompt we, as designers and facilitators, developed and helped sustain with the children. It built on previous activities meant to bring in histories and stories of confronting and overcoming oppression as a community. For instance, the children had participated in multiple read-alouds of the award winning children’s book *Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family’s Fight for Desegregation* (Tonatiuh, 2014), which focused on a young girl named Sylvia and her family’s legal battle for desegregation in

California schools. The story resonated with the children who realized that they, like Sylvia, were U.S. citizens who were not being treated as equals to other racial groups, namely Whites. We also supported the children in exploring how murals can be created to convey and organize political action. The focus on murals and the book were intentional ways of linking to Mexican cultural practices of resistance and political organizing. It was approximately nine months before the election and the topic of Donald Trump was bubbling up in small group conversations. We knew and were planning for the likelihood of helping the children to articulate and develop their counter-narratives or other responses to Trump's racist and xenophobic campaign rhetoric.

In Camden's original drawing as well as in the play and the writing that it inspired, children brought in messages they were receiving about themselves and their communities that they were actively working to make sense of. As children who identified largely as Mexican and American, Trump's campaign speeches and social media posts were spreading the message that these two identities were mutually exclusive. This generated questions of identity and belonging for the students. Who were they if they couldn't be both? To which community did they belong? In falsely presenting these identifications as incompatible with one another, Trump's campaign was directly contradicting the children's lived experiences and denying their very existence as Mexican and American. Not only were these identities presented as incompatible with one another, but they were each ascribed qualities and characteristics that resulted in value-laden caricatures of the good American and the bad Mexican. Mexicans were depicted as villainous, as criminals who were sneaking into a place where they did not belong, so that they could hurt, steal from, and displace white Americans, who were alternatively positioned as innocent and heroic. Entirely ignoring our history as colonizers, policies and physical boundaries such as the

proposed Wall were explained as necessary in order to preserve the innocence of Americans and prevent them from falling victim to the deviant behavior of the usurping Mexicans.

The children engaged in interpretive reproduction to respond to these unjust characterizations in their play, and ultimately, to assert their right to belong. In their illustrations, writing, acting, and conversation, they presented the conditions of their current reality. Donald Trump wanted to be president, and in the process of his campaigning, he described the children and their families as interlopers who were trying to hurt good, white Americans. They highlighted this reality in the physical portrayal of Trump as large and imposing, with heavily drawn eyebrows and a scowl, and in their surrounding conversations, where a repeated refrain was that Trump wants to send us back to Mexico. Yet, the children did not accept the narrative that was given. The children worked together to dissect and disrupt his positioning of them as bad Mexicans. They openly resisted his bid for candidacy through the creation of protest imagery and vocabulary, as well as by calls to educate Trump as to who Mexicans really are. They worked collectively to develop a vision of a hopeful future in which Hillary wins the election. Beyond this win, the children also imagined that Trump could learn “respect” and come to appreciate that “unique is good.” In this future, the children would be able to maintain their expansive identities as being from both Mexico and the United States.

Determining Essential Goodness at the Border

Like the previous example, the play scene described in this section highlights how children engaged in interpretive reproduction as a means of examining what it means to belong. In the previous example, the play represented reality; they were directly contending with, responding to, and resisting Trump’s campaign rhetoric. In this example, the scene is in the

fantasy realm, but one that mirrors the issues that the children are contending with during the Trump presidency.

Approximately one year following the election of Donald Trump, we were nearing the end of a project in which the children were designing and building their own cities in response to a perceived social problem or need. A nine year-old male student named Sam with a love of horror stories and a penchant for plaid flannel was standing off to the side of the children gathered on the floor. He was looking towards the empty half of the cafeteria, and declared out loud that it was heaven, and asked if Emily (Author 1) would like to explore it. He walked her through what he saw in his heaven, including clouds and angels, but told her that it could be anything she wanted it to be, adding that “it’s most like heaven if you close your eyes.” She asked if she could enter if she was still alive, and Sam said yes, but only for six minutes, after which point she would be unable to return to the living world. To make the distinction between worlds clear, he declared that he was going to make a gate, which would be called “Heaven’s Gate.”

As he began gathering materials and draping blankets over the open space between two cafeteria tables, other children became curious, and came over to ask questions and contribute to the scene. One child asked if everyone could go to heaven, and Sam thoughtfully replied that yes, if you are “essentially good.” He continued to explain that you cannot come in if you are “essentially bad,” and pointed to a different corner of the room, which he referred to as “the banished lands.”

Back in heaven, an eight year-old female student with a keen eye for detail declared herself the gatekeeper, and began constructing a chain link rope of out of paper, a costume that included a long, shiny green robe, and a staff with a hook on the end so she could open and close

the entrance rope. Consequential questions began to emerge about what it means to be essentially good or bad, and who gets to decide. The children thought God should decide, and elected a female pre-service teacher with long, dark hair to be the first to play God, and constructed a robe for her to wear. One energetic seven year-old said he would build a computer system in which your goodness or badness is recorded, and a construction-minded female student interested in technology built a hand scanner to expedite the process of locating your records. All of the children who applied for entry to Heaven used the hand scanner and the computer system deemed them “good.” With this evaluation, they received a yellow ticket labeled with the words “Heaven” and “yes” or “no” checkboxes, with an X in the yes box. They were then permitted to go to the gate, where they turned over their ticket to the gatekeeper. One particularly enthusiastic student named José sought to seek out an answer to the question, can you be kicked out of heaven? He shouted nonsense words and ran from group to group, eventually stealing a pretend bottle of holy water, labeled with its imagined Gatorade sponsorship, in order to garner the attention of God and God’s assistant Sam. They asked him over to a table and they spoke with eyes closed, where José explained that he just wanted to drink the holy water. God, nodding, said that she knew José was “innocent” and asked him to try not to disrupt the other members of heaven before telling him how much she cared for him and everyone in heaven. For today at least, it was determined that heaven was not a place that you could be removed from. By the end of the afternoon, all but one small group of students had abandoned the towns and cities they had been building to assist in the creation of Heaven’s Gate. They were deeply engaged in a collective sensemaking experience, as they built a community and negotiated who belonged and under what conditions.

Although Trump's name was never explicitly stated, the parallels to the proposed border wall, and the characterizations of the Mexicans and Americans on either side, were difficult to ignore. Upon its creation, heaven was immediately designated as a space for individuals who are "essentially good," mirroring the campaign's presentation of white Americans. Like the U.S., it was positioned as a desirable place to be, and as such, it and the people within its borders, needed to be protected from possible infiltration. The gate defined the borders of heaven and a gatekeeper was posted to secure it from unapproved entry. An elaborate technological system was developed to enforce border security and ensure that only people whose documentation verified their essential goodness would be allowed to enter, mirroring the uncertainty that many of the children's extended family members were facing as immigrants without documentation.

Within minutes of designating heaven as a community for the "essentially good," a place for those who were turned away from heaven for not being "good enough" was created. The "banished lands" were located just outside of the gate to heaven, and its name was significant. It was not labeled simply as hell, which is commonly considered to be the antithesis of heaven, but instead referenced banishment, a process of being removed from and forbidden from returning to a place in which you were formerly welcome. Again, this process of being forcibly removed from, and unable to return to, a place that one considers to be their home, resonated with the children's fears about who belongs in America and what might lead to banishment. What actions or behaviors could result in removal from the community, if any? What does it mean to be a community if your membership is contingent upon continued adherence to preferred norms and ways of being? What would it take for me to be banished from his home?

In their play, the children demonstrated their deep and informed awareness of Mexican and Mexican-Americans' uncertain future in the U.S. The children's play reproduced the

situations and constraints they and their families were facing. At the same time, the children's play was also transformative. In their version, everyone was approved for entrance to heaven, determined to be essentially good. While the banished lands existed, they were devoid of any inhabitants. If your paperwork was lost between when you received your approval to enter Heaven and when you presented it at the gate, you could simply return to the computer and hand scanner and repeat the process. Heaven was an inclusive community, and while it remains to be seen if there is anything that can get you banished from heaven, it was clear that the immediate consequence for causing a perceived disruption was not eviction, but a conversation with the chosen leader, God.

Discussion

As educators, it is imperative for us to take seriously the issues with which our students are contending. In the current political moment, when elements of students' identities and experience are at an increased risk of being dismissed by the President himself, this is all the more necessary. Young children should not be exempt from these conversations for the sake of preserving their presumed innocence. Children are acutely aware of their surroundings and are working to make sense of the largely unspoken rules that govern society. When we ignore this reality, it harms children from non-dominant communities the most. They are positioned as being too young to discuss the very injustices they may be experiencing. When we do not provide children space to discuss what they are experiencing or seeing, they are deprived of the opportunity to process their experience, effectively marginalizing them a second time.

In our examination of the role of play in exploring issues of equity and justice at EPIC, we examined when play occurred, and what topics or themes were being explored. We found that while children's play sometimes formed as a direct response to the projects that we had

intentionally designed, there were other moments when children's play occurred in spite of our planned activities. For example, the Heaven's Gate play scene emerged when students were supposed to be working on building one part of the city they had designed in response to a perceived social injustice. Instead, Sam began an exploration of what heaven is that other children became intrigued by, and they began abandoning their projects to support his. These moments of resistance were informative, as the children signaled that they had consequential issues to explore, but that they were proposing a different framework for its exploration. In those moments, it was our job as educators to listen to what they were telling us they needed to investigate, and the means by which they needed to do it. While this could be labeled as a form of resistance, our positioning of children as experts on their own lives reframed it as a form of inquiry and communication.

In the semesters leading up to, during, and following the election, children's play centered on explorations of identity, belonging, and what it means to be a deserving member of a community. The journey for each child was unique, where some held strongly to one emotional response throughout the stages of the election, and others cycled through anger, sadness, frustration, and empowerment. Overwhelmingly, the children responded to and resisted Trump's positioning of them in generous and agentic ways, simultaneously rejecting his negative characterizations of them as Mexicans and creating space for teaching him about who they truly were. Contrary to his characterizations of them, the children positioned Trump as capable of change and transformation. He was simply misinformed and "needed to learn," and they expressed their willingness to teach him.

Children used both dramatic play and art as means of responding to Trump's campaign as well as to explore broader questions of what it means to live in a pluralistic society. Drawing

provided a means of taking up and responding directly to Trump's characterizations of Mexicans, as well as to voice their support for other candidates, such as Hillary Clinton, whose message they deemed to be more inclusive. The children took a number of actions to respond directly to the messages they were receiving about themselves and their place in the country. These included designing and creating posters that advocated for a particular candidate, responding to a candidate whose views positioned them negatively, and encouraging the adults in their life to vote. Creating these posters acknowledged both their awareness of the issue, the real implications it held for their lives, and the validity of their cognitive and emotional responses, even as children. At EPIC, drawing primarily served as a means of taking up and responding to real-life issues of inequity and injustice. Dramatic play, on the other hand, provided a way for students to take up the same issues at a distance, through the lens of fantasy. In their dramatic play, children responded to the same themes as those who were making posters, but in a fantasy world. In both drawing and play, children were attending to consequential, equity-oriented, issues, most notably the question of what it means to belong, and who gets to decide. However, in the case of dramatic play, the question of belonging was placed in a new and different context – that of an imagined heaven. This allowed children to experiment with different outcomes without real-life consequences. José could try out different behaviors and ways of being to see what would and would not result in his dismissal from heaven, knowing that when the play began again, he could return and begin again without consequence. His condition was impermanent, in a way that it is not in real life when it comes to enforcement of discriminatory immigration practices. It is important that both of these activities – fantasy or dramatic play and art or, more specifically, drawing – were used in conjunction with one another, as drawing was taken up predominantly as a direct response to injustice by older students, and dramatic play was

taken up as a way to investigate injustice in a fantasy realm by our younger students. Play and imagination were distinctive features of both, in that children considered, investigated, experimented with, and advocated for different possible futures.

While our intention in sharing our process of design and reflection is to provide a model others might use when considering how to approach issues of inequity and injustice with young children, we also want to acknowledge the very real constraints that are placed on classroom teachers. We know that we were able to immerse ourselves so thoroughly in children's playworlds and our investigation of them because our afterschool program was a site for both equity-oriented teaching and research. We know that this kind of flexibility is rare, particularly with the emphasis on standardization and accountability in current educational reform movements. Our hope is that even in the most constrained environment where children's time, attention, and behavior are highly regulated, we as educators can look for moments when children's play cannot be quelled, when it resists containment, and provides insight into the issues of equity children are contending with. If we are to resist Trumpism through transformative education, we need to listen to, honor, and create space for children's own language of resistance – play and imagination.

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ARTICLE THREE

Honoring the Relationship Between Teacher and Student Emotion: Implications for the Design of Professional Developments Focused on Social Emotional Development

Emily Claire Price

Recent research in education, psychology, and neuroscience has emphasized both the social and emotional aspects of learning, positing that the process of learning does not occur in isolation, nor is it a purely rational or cognitive process (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Madrid, Fernie & Kantor, 2015). Rather, learning is a dynamic, embodied process which utilizes emotion and occurs in and through interaction with others (Diaz & Flores, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). Greater recognition of the social and emotional dimensions of learning require teachers to understand what this means for their pedagogy and engagement with students. The interrelationship between emotion and cognition in learning in particular is an area of research that is not yet integrated into many teacher education programs, but which teachers need to understand if they are to provide effective and holistic education for students. In this paper, we interview teachers who participated in a professional development sequence focused on mindfulness and SEL in elementary school classrooms in order to understand how they characterize the role of and space for emotion in teaching and learning.

At the same time that advances in research are emphasizing the social and emotional components of learning, K-12 schools are under increased pressure to focus their instruction on disciplinary content knowledge that is assessed on standardized tests. Since the passage of No Child Behind in 2001 in particular, this has resulted in both a narrowing of the curriculum, and an emphasis on individual performance on academic tasks (McGuinn, 2006; Spring, 2014). The growth of social emotional learning (SEL) programs over roughly the same time period, as well

as an increased attention to mindfulness and other contemplative approaches in educational contexts, have provided a much-needed means of attending to students' emotional well-being during school days that are increasingly regimented in their dedication to measurable, academic skills. In order for teachers to be able to assist students in recognizing, managing, and attending to their own emotions, teachers need to be fluent in these practices as well (Greenberg & Jennings, 2009). The importance of attending to teachers' own emotional well-being extends beyond their ability to be able to teach these skills to students. We also need to attend to teacher's emotional capacities because teaching is inherently an emotional endeavor (Liston, 2000). It requires one to be both aware of and able to manage one's own emotions, as well as to recognize and respond to emotional cues in others (Schonert-Reichl, Hanson-Peterson, & Hymel, 2015). At a time when over 50 percent of the teaching force leaves within the first five years citing stress as the most common reason for their departure, we need to provide our teachers with the tools needed to survive in a profession that will demand both their emotional and cognitive capacities (Darling-Hammond, 2001; 2006; Jennings & Frank, 2015).

While the need to attend to teachers' own social and emotional well-being as a component of preparing educators to teach SEL and mindfulness is well-documented, what this looks like in practice – particularly in the context of district provided professional development - is not. In response to the relative lack of examples of how we can attend to this meaningfully in professional development (PD), the authors of this paper designed a two-part study which set out to (1) document the process of co-designing and implementing a PD sequence titled *Culturally Responsive Approaches to Mindfulness, Kindness, and Compassion in the Classroom* with a group of elementary school teachers, and (2) investigate how the participating teachers characterized the role of and space for emotion in the classroom for their students, and for

themselves. This article focuses on the second part of the study, wherein we conducted a qualitative interview analysis of how the participating teachers described and demonstrated the import of emotion to their practice as teachers and to their students' learning process, as well as how they characterized the space available for attending to their own and their students' emotional well-being in the context of their classroom or school. By examining how the participating teachers view the role of emotion in their own and their students' lives, we aimed to consider how we can better design PD opportunities that are dedicated to social emotional well-being in schools. This study is guided by the following research question: *How do teachers who participated in a professional development sequence focused on social emotional well-being describe the role of and space for emotion in teaching and learning?* We provide a brief overview of the PD and then discuss key findings that point to teachers' conceptualization of student and teacher emotion as an interrelated process. We conclude with considerations for what this conceptualization means with respect to designing effective and transformative PDs on social emotional well-being for teachers.

The Call to Teach: Teaching as a Vocation

The role of emotion in the lives of teachers, and the centrality of emotion to teachers' practice, has long been a point of discussion in education research, though little space has been provided to attending to it in practice in traditional pre-service or in-service teacher education contexts. Palmer writes of teaching as occurring at the intersection of teachers' private and public lives, inherently a vulnerable location. Further, Palmer contends that the connections capable teachers provide – between students, themselves, and subject matter – emerge not from their methodology, but from their hearts, defining heart “as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self” (1998, p. 11). Liston (2000, 2004) attends to the

role of love in teachers’ lives, reflecting how a love of learning, and the promise of passing along that love to others, draws people to the profession. Like Palmer, Liston reflects on the vulnerability of this position, looking at the role of despair in teachers’ lives when the invitation to engage in learning is continually offered and rescinded. The Courage to Lead, a transformative year-long retreat cycle developed from Palmer’s work by the Center for Courage and Renewal, aims to assist professionals in the helping professions, such as teachers, reconnect what they do with who they are (Jurow & Pierce, 2011). While this sustained transformative approach serves as an excellent example of what can be accomplished for and with individuals who have the time and resources to invest in external learning opportunities, in this study we aim to consider how we can better design district-provided professional developments to similarly account for the import of teachers’ emotion to their own practice.

When teaching is understood not as a job, but as a vocation, we can appreciate the degree to which emotion is central to a teacher’s practice. In his book *The Call to Teach* (2005) Hansen describes the characteristics of a vocation, as well as the dispositions and beliefs of a vocational teacher, as outlined in the two tables below.

Table 1. Characteristics of a vocation

A Vocation...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exists at the intersection of public obligation and personal fulfillment. • Emerges over a long period of time. • Has social rather than psychological origins. • Is different from a job, career, work, or occupation. • Connotes a disposition to be of service in a form that can evolve as one responds to one’s circumstances. • Is not selfless devotion.

Table 2. Dispositions of a vocation teacher

A Vocational Teacher...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regards teaching as more than simply a choice among the array of jobs available in society.• Believes teaching to be potentially meaningful, and that it can serve as the way to instantiate one's desire to contribute to and engage with the world.• Demonstrates a love of the drudgery teaching involves.• Is disposed to be attentive to detail and nuance.• Can still harbor real doubts about how successful one might be (or is) in the classroom. Doubt and commitment can go together.• Presumes teaching is an activity whose meaning is larger than the sum of its parts.

In this study, we draw on interview data collected from elementary teachers who opted into a three-session professional development sequence titled *Culturally Responsive Approaches to Mindfulness, Kindness, and Compassion in the Classroom*. While we will look at the participants and site in more detail in the *Methods* section, it is important to note now that of the 21 teachers who participated in the PD, 18 were veteran teachers with more than ten years of experience. Additionally, all nine of the teachers who opted into the interviews identified at least two of the twelve characteristics of teaching as a vocation when asked to describe what teaching is, and what it means for them to occupy the role of teacher. As an example, we will analyze the following excerpt from an interview with Jessica, a participating elementary in her late 40s. In this excerpt, she describes her journey to becoming a teaching, emphasizing the ways in which she sought other career paths first, but ultimately, couldn't ignore the call any longer.

Teaching to me is my calling. Well, I've always had an affinity for children and for animals; I've always been a very sensitive, kind of emotionally connected person. But I didn't want to be a teacher. I pushed it aside and went and got a psychology degree. I thought I would maybe have a private practice or be a counselor in some capacity, and

when I graduated with my psychology degree, I got a job working in sales - well meeting planning originally, and then sales, selling corporate training to businesses. So I was using psychology but more with adults, like team building exercises and customer service programs. So I'd sell either video and audio tape programs that would be used to train staff, or send a speaker to the staff and set up an on-site seminar geared towards their organization. And it was kind of like the golden handcuffs because I was making really good money right out of school. I'm very blessed to say that, but I wasn't happy. The golden, they were like golden handcuffs. And that sounds so awful to say because I was thinking to myself, well, you could volunteer in the soup kitchen or you could teach kids to ski or you could find another outlet to fulfill that soul piece and still make decent money. But eventually, it just couldn't sustain me any longer, so I decided, my husband and I made a decision that when we had children that I was going to be able to stay home and just work part time so that I could raise our kids. One of us could be the primary caregiver. So I did that for ten years, and when they started elementary school, I was in the classroom all the time. I was volunteering, could you be the room parent, could you help with this field trip. And so I was like all right, I can't run from it anymore. This is what I'm supposed to do. And ten years ago, yeah, I can't run from it anymore, I decided to go back and get my teaching certificate and started in on my masters through the friends teacher intern program.

So at that point my kids were seven and 10 and I got a student teaching job in their school. So we would all go, that was when it was still cool to have your mom in school with you. We'd all drive in together, park in the teacher lot, carry our little lunches in, and meet at the end of the day and go home. So I got my teaching certificate and starting teaching. And I do feel like it's a calling. And sometimes when I'm in the building, and I'm around teachers that have been teaching, that's the only thing they've ever done and they feel really burned out and what if I had tried this, what if I had done that. They don't know. And I feel like I checked that box, I did that, I know what it feels like, and this is where I want to be. Maybe the money's not as good, but it's not always about money. Fortunately I have a partner who works too so we can figure that out. But for me, I needed some soul work. I needed to answer my calling and be with children. And not so much, I don't really want to just sit there and drill math and science, and of course I do, but I want them to be excited about the learning process and I want to help them discover their unique gifts, because we all have gifts, so I can help them find that and bring them out. Like you know, wow, Hannah, you're such an amazing artist, I hope that you keep drawing. You know, whatever it is that their calling is and their little gift is. I love to help them find that. (Interview, December 16, 2017).

In this excerpt, Jessica identifies teaching as her calling directly on two occasions, and describes other positions she occupied or considered as unsustainable. She recalls coming to terms with her perceived need to teach, stating that she couldn't run from it anymore; it was what she was supposed to be doing. For Jessica, teaching was not a question of if, but when and under what

circumstances. Additionally, in describing teaching as soul work, in contrast with other positions that left her unhappy, we see evidence of how occupying the position is personally fulfilling to her, as well as being a vehicle to positively contribute to society.

The second most frequently coded characteristic of Hansen's model of teaching as a vocation in the interview data is that it presumes teaching to be an activity whose meaning is larger than the sum of its parts. Teachers who practice teaching as a vocation see it as more than simply a set of practices performed in a particular order. Teaching requires authentic responses to students and their changing circumstances in real time, making it impossible to be reduced to a pre-determined set of actionable steps. We see evidence of this in Jessica's description of how she describes what she does, noting that "of course" she completes math and science drills with her students, presumably in response to the common perspective that this is what it means to teach – to present students with information, and to assess their ability to retain it. She acknowledges that this is a component of what she does, but it is only one element, and does not remotely attend to the meaning and value she ascribes to teaching. For Jessica, this meaning is most clearly felt when she is helping children to discover their unique gifts.

What this example highlights is how the participating teachers, teaching is more than just a job or even a career – it is a vocation they were called to, and ignoring the call is not an option; it is simply a question of when and where to respond. As the framing of vocation attests to, teaching is both emotional and cognitive work. It requires an emotional investment and vulnerability on the part of the teacher, which means teacher educators need to pay attention to how to support teachers' emotional well-being. We are not currently doing an adequate job of helping teachers develop repertoires for supporting their students' social emotional development, and are barely scratching the surface regarding how to support their own emotional well-being.

By looking at how veteran, vocational teachers describe the role of and space for emotion in teaching and learning, we aim to consider how we might better design professional development opportunities for all teachers that recognize the ways in which teachers' identities can be constructed in and through their emotional investment in their practice.

Organizing Productive SEL Professional Development for Teachers

There are two broad arguments for attending to teachers' social emotional well-being, the first being the need for teachers to be trained in SEL such that they are able to nurture the development of social emotional competencies in their students. Because the very nature of learning is relational, teachers are in a unique position to recognize and attend to the social and emotional needs of their students. The climate of a student's learning environment is largely determined by their teacher (Greenberg & Jennings, 2009). According to a nationally representative survey of 600 teachers in the U.S. (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan in 2013), teachers believe that SEL is central to their work, noting specifically their belief that SEL skills are teachable, as well as beneficial to students across economic backgrounds. However, these same teachers also noted feeling ill-prepared to address this need, particularly when related to disruptive behaviors or issues of student mental health. Analyses of educational curricula confirm that preservice teacher education programs are not adequately preparing teachers to deal with student social, emotional, and behavioral problems (Schonert-Reichl, Hanson-Peterson, & Hymel., 2015; State, Kern, Starosta, & Mukherjee, 2011; Vinnes, Kennan, & Green, 2014). Specifically, these analyses found that little attention is being dedicated to providing teachers with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for promoting their students' social and emotional competence or with creating positive and supportive classroom learning environments (Greenberg, Putnam, & Walsh, 2013; Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Indeed, according to the findings

of the Social-Emotional Learning in Teacher Education (SEL-Ted) project, which examined the role of SEL in each state's teacher education program standards, not one state had standards that addressed all five core competency domains for teachers³. While 71 percent of state standards addressed at least one competency, only 22 percent touched on either competency in the self-domain, indicating that even when competencies for teachers were included, they focused on the outward social domains over skills as such identifying, manage, and express their own feelings (Schonert-Reichl, Hanson-Peterson, & Hymel, 2015).

The lack of attention to SEL in pre-service teacher education is echoed for practicing teachers, whose primary resource for learning new material is professional development. Yet, there is often a mismatch between what we know about what characterizes effective PD and the form it usually takes. Broadly speaking, effective professional development provides sustained, coherent, and participatory learning opportunities for teachers to explore and integrate into their existing practice. However, PD is usually structured as a 'one-shot' workshop, where external consultants present on a particular topic or subject during a teacher inservice day, which denies them the opportunity to practice, discuss, and interrogate new information (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Jennings & Frank, 2015).

Second, attention to teacher SEL is central to the effort to reduce teacher burnout and attrition, a major hindrance to improving teacher quality. As discussed earlier, teaching is both emotional and cognitive work, and it requires an emotional investment and vulnerability on the part of the teacher. In a field where emotion is central to the work itself, we must help teachers develop repertoires for attending to their own emotional well-being. Stress, poor emotion management, and concerns about student behavior and discipline are the top three reasons given

³ The five core competencies are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (www.casel.org)

when teachers leave the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2001; 2006; Ferguson, Frost, & Hall, 2012). Research has indicated that the recent emphasis on high-stakes standardized testing has intensified teacher distress, particularly for teachers working in underfunded districts or at schools in danger of failing (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Jennings & Frank, 2015).

Though not focused specifically on SEL professional development, there have been several influential studies conducted over the last fifteen years that have examined the characteristics of effective PD for teachers more broadly. Using a national probability sampling of 1027 teachers, Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon (2001) identified three components of professional development that have had statistically significant positive impacts on teacher self-reports, including a focus on content knowledge, opportunities for active, participatory learning, and coherence with other professional activities and standards. Garet et al. (2001) identified three structural design features that can influence the effectiveness of PD based on the three components. These include the form of the professional development, the duration of the professional development, and the activities that are included in the professional development. Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher (2007) also examined characteristics of PD based on teacher survey results from 454 PD participants. Consistent with Garet et al.'s study findings, the authors found that teachers' perception of the coherency of their experience, as well as the inclusion of time for teachers to collaboratively plan for implementation, were significant factors in how teachers rated the effectiveness of a given professional development experience. The importance of experiential learning to the effectiveness of PD has been well-documented across studies (Avalos, 2011; Girvan, Conneely, & Tangney, 2016; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2007). Jennings and Frank (2015) summarize these findings and consider their relevance to designing professional developments in SEL, stating

PD opportunities that are presented consistently over an extended period of time and involve active group participation and collaboration are superior to the typical “one-shot” workshop approach most teachers experience. Similarly, PD that helps deepen teachers’ content knowledge of key SEL concepts and theories underlying SEL program practices, while also providing opportunities for teachers to actively apply this knowledge to real-life situations, is important for helping teachers generalize and transfer their new knowledge and skills to a classroom setting. Finally, PD can play an important role in helping teachers understand how the goals of SEL programs fit within the broader context of other school, district, and statewide educational goals (pp. 423-424).

The professional development sequence we designed attempted to build on these insights, the process of which will be detailed in full in a separate article, and is summarized in the section that follows. In particular, we designed our PD across three sessions, included time for collaborative planning, and integrated experiential learning.

Methods

Context and Overview

The professional development sequence which served as the site for recruiting for interviews was the final phase in a three-part collaboration on SEL and mindfulness between the school district and a project team led by Dr. Sona Dimidjan, the Principal Investigator (PI) and a professor in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at the University of Colorado Boulder, and funded by a private donor. The team included professors, graduate students, and teacher educators in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience and the School of Education. The first phase was the collaborative design and implementation of a district-wide survey used to map the existing SEL practices and programs being used in the district’s 60 schools. Over 90% of schools responded, and a major finding was teachers’ perception that in order for SEL programming and practices with students to succeed, it is necessary to attend to teachers’ social and emotional wellness. In response to this desire, the second phase of the collaboration was the development of a working group with 14 elementary school teachers from

the district and the project team. Teachers with experience in teaching diverse student populations with mindfulness, kindness, compassion were actively recruited, and met several times over a two-month period with the goal of providing direction for the next phase of the collaboration, the development of the professional development. The sequence was co-designed with six of the teachers from the working group and the project team, and included components that they deemed necessary for a successful professional development experience, namely, the inclusion of experts on the topics; the provision of time for collaboration; and lesson plans and other takeaway materials developed by the workshop group.

The school district we partnered with is a midsize district in the U.S. Mountain West. It is predominantly suburban, with a small number of schools operating in more remote mountain towns. As a whole, the district is fairly affluent, with a median income of over \$90,000, and over 85% of students coming from households with adults that have attended at least some college. Of the roughly 42,000 students the districts serve, the vast majority are white (approximately 36,000), with approximately 5000 students identifying as Hispanic or Latino, and less than 1000 students identifying as black, African-American, American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Pacific Islander (<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch>; <https://censusreporter.org>). As an open-enrollment, school choice based system, the district has experienced some self-segregation, so there are several schools that serve a higher population of students from low-income households and/or whose first language is not English (Howe, Eisenhart, & Betebenner, 2002).

Site and Participants

The professional development sequence included three sessions, occurring on August 10th, September 18th, and October 13th, 2017. Each session was approximately one month apart, with the first session occurring prior to the beginning of the school year. Each session met from

8:00 – 11:30 am, and was led by Dimidjian and Michelle Shedro, a veteran pre-service and in-service teacher educator. Price helped facilitate the first session, but moved into an observer role for the second two sessions. Drawing from the characteristics of effective professional development (e.g. extended time, experiential learning, and collaborative planning among teachers) and the insights shared in the working group, each session included videos from experts on mindfulness, neuroscience, and culturally responsive teacher educators, in addition to the expertise shared by the facilitators. Additionally, each session included time for both individual reflection and collaboration and collective sense-making, as well as hands-on making and community building activities. The sessions were held in a high school classroom during in-service days, with other professional developments occurring in neighboring classrooms.

The session was open to first - fifth grade classroom teachers, and was at capacity with 22 teachers enrolled. Twenty-one of the teachers were female, with one male. Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the participants enrolled were veteran teachers, with more than ten years experience. Mirroring national teacher demographics and the racial make-up of the district as a whole, 20 of the teachers identified as white and indicated that English was their first language. Two of the teachers taught in a majority Latino school, with a concentrated population of emergent bilingual students with a household income below the district average.

All participating teachers were invited to be a part of the accompanying research study, but were not required to participate as a condition of their enrollment. Participation included the audio-recording of small and whole group conversations during the sessions, the completion of entrance and exist surveys, and a one-hour interview with Author 1 following the conclusion of the profession development session. All teachers consented to audio-recording and the collection of survey data, as well as the interview, though only nine ultimately were interviewed. Teachers

were compensated for their time to complete the surveys and the interview in the form of a gift-card at a rate of approximately \$30 an hour. One participating teacher left the study after the first session due to an inability to attend the remaining sessions.

Data Collection

We approached our data collection efforts with three goals in mind: to document our design process; to capture the participating teachers' learning and experiences in the professional development sequence; and to chronicle the participating teachers' perspective on the role of and space for emotion in their classrooms and in education broadly. The first and second goals are attended to exclusively in a separate article about the process of co-design and teacher level outcomes. The central inquiry of this article focused on the third goal, and our primary source of data were the teacher interviews, which Price conducted with nine individual teachers in the month following the conclusion of the professional development sequence. Though most of the other data was collected for our other study on the design and teacher-level outcomes of the PD, we did use some of this data to confirm findings from the interview transcripts. Additionally, we collected all of the data together before deciding to write up our analysis in two separate articles, so I think it is worth outlining the data collected across the project, while noting that the primary source of data utilized in this study are the interviews. In addition to the interviews, we audio-recorded each of the three sessions, with the second two sessions including multiple recorders to capture small as well as whole group conversations, and Price recorded observational fieldnotes for the second two sessions. We administered two pre- and post- surveys, the Malasch Burnout Inventory Educator Survey (Malasch, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986) and the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, which looked at teachers' emotional well-being and their contemplative practices.

We also included an introductory questionnaire completed by teachers at the beginning of the first session. The specifics of the data we collected are summarized in the table below.

Table 3. Summary of data collected

Data Source	Time of Collection	Number
Audio-recording of PD sessions	8/10, 9/18, 10/13/17	3 sets
Observational fieldnotes	9/18, 10/13/17	2 sets
Planning documents	ongoing	
Introductory Questionnaire	8/10/17	22
Teacher Burnout Surveys – pre and post	Aug. and Nov.	17
Mindfulness Surveys – pre and post	Aug. and Nov.	18
Audio-recordings and transcriptions of interviews with teachers (45 – 90 min)	Nov. and Dec.	9
Memos written by Author 1 during coding and analysis	Dec. - March	26

Data Analysis

As a qualitative research study that is focused on social actors’ meaning making, we used an inductive approach to data analysis using methods drawn from grounded theory. Specifically, we collected data and conducting analysis simultaneously in an iterative process and analyzed actions and processes in addition to teachers’ descriptions (Charmaz, 2009; 2014; Erickson, 1985). We used comparative methods, and engaged in open, axial, and selective coding consistent with grounded theory approaches (Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The interviews served as the primary sources of data for our analysis, while the observations, planning documents, and surveys were primarily used as a form of triangulation and to identify confirming or disconfirming evidence. All interviews were transcribed and coded in MAXQDA,

a software tool designed to support qualitative coding and analysis of video, audio, and text files. Following principles of grounded theory, the first round of codes that we developed were open and inductive and sought to identify the different ways in which the teachers participated in the PD, and how they described the relationship to their students and their practice. Using these initial coded excerpts, we wrote memos about the processes, actions, and emotions that were uncovered to create new conceptual categories, as well as a focus on keywords, for the second and third rounds of coding. The second round of coding focused on the ways in which teachers' characterization of their practice, and their actions in the PD, aligned with the framing of teaching as a vocation and the characteristics associated with this framing. The third round of coding considered the interrelationship between teacher and student emotion, and how this relates to the participants' positioning as being called to teach. Using methods of constant comparison, we continued to write memos and look for confirming and disconfirming evidence in the observation fieldnotes, surveys, and questionnaire during and after the second and third rounds of coding.

Limitations

This study investigated how teachers who participated in a professional development sequence focused on social emotional well-being characterized the role of and space for emotion in teaching and learning. A limitation of this study is that the teachers self-selected into the professional development and the accompanying study, and the majority of participants indicated that they were either already interested in or actively practicing mindfulness and/or SEL in their classrooms or in their personal lives. Additionally, the majority of the teachers who participated in the PD and the study were veteran teachers with over ten years of teaching experience. It is not clear whether a group of novice teachers in the same district would have similarly

characterized the role of emotion in learning, or the space they have for attending to it in their classroom. Finally, the subset of teachers in the full study who participated in the interviews were all vocational teachers, which requires a level of emotional investment that may not be the case for teachers who don't perceive their practice as a vocation.

Findings

In the sections to follow, we answer the research question *How do teachers who participated in a professional development sequence focused on social emotional well-being characterize the role of and space for emotion in teaching and learning?* We take a three-part approach, first looking at how the veteran, vocational teachers described the import of emotion to their students' learning in the classroom. Next, we identify how the participating teachers characterized the space available for attending to their students and their own emotion in the classroom. Finally, we examine the ways in which the teachers described the relationship between their students' and their own emotions, investigating the ways in this group of vocational teachers perceived a reciprocity of emotion between themselves and their students. In the *Discussion* section, we consider how these teachers' understanding of the interrelationship between teacher and student emotion impacts how we plan PDs about emotion in teaching and learning.

The Role of Emotion in Learning

Participating teachers consistently described emotion as central to their students' learning. All of the teachers who were interviewed named emotion as playing a large role in their students' learning when asked how they would characterize the import of emotion to their classroom and to their students' academic progress. However, when asked to expand on how emotion operated in relation to learning, their responses differed, with two-thirds (6) of the

teachers describing their working in tandem. Their descriptions aligned with Immordino-Yang & Damasio's (2007) concept of emotional thought, which is a helpful heuristic for considering how emotion and cognition work together to produce learning. As the authors argue, the aspects of cognition that are most heavily drawn upon in schools, including attention, memory, motivation, and decision-making, are both affected by and subsumed within processes of emotion. Thus, although rational thought and reasoning do exist, they "cannot be recruited appropriately and usefully in the real world without emotion. Emotions help to direct our reasoning into the sector of knowledge that is relevant to the current situation or problem" (pp. 7-8). In this framing, emotion and cognition work together to produce learning. The teachers who described emotion as being used in relationship with content knowledge to produce learning appeared to be referencing a similar heuristic, wherein learning comes from the interaction of emotion and cognition in emotional thought. Often this was described in relation to community building activities and the import of the social and collaborative elements of the classroom. As one teacher, Carrie, describes the role of emotion in learning, she stated,

Well of course there's a whole social piece around collaborating and communicating, getting along with others, figuring out how to work with other personalities and temperaments, which is huge. All day long I'm resolving conflicts and helping kids use their words. I want them to be able to find peaceful solutions to daily conflicts and arguments. I want them to be able to identify their emotions and know how to take care of themselves. (Interview, December 14, 2017)

In this example, the teacher interviewed highlighted the extent to which she perceived learning to be a social and collective process. To the extent that learning is collaborative, awareness of one's own emotions and recognition and response to others' emotions is a component of the learning process.

The remaining one-third of teachers (3) described emotion as functioning as a gatekeeper to student learning, with the ability to facilitate or impede it. One teacher provided these metaphors, “I think emotions are huge and so – almost like a gateway, right? A doorway through which you are blocked or allowed to pass” (Interview, November 30, 2017). Essentially, teachers described how positive emotions and outlooks created space for learning to occur, and negative emotions or emotions that indicated that a child’s needs weren’t being met hindered or prevented the learning process. Carrie, continuing from the statement shared above, provides an example of needing to allow a student space to process the feeling of anger before engaging them in the learning process. She states,

Some kids don’t want to talk about it. They’re mad, they want to go to their desk, they need some time to cool off. And we’ll say, hey, Johnny for example, needs a little bit of space and a little bit of time. Let’s give that to him, and then, when he’s ready or if he’s ready to talk about it, he will. And then I might casually, as we’re working on our thing, go over and check in and just see if there is something that I can do without all eyes on him or her. (Interview, December 14, 2017)

In this example, Johnny was not able to participate in the learning activity as designed until he was able to process his anger, highlighting the way in which Carrie saw his anger as an impediment to his learning. In both cases, the teachers identified emotion as playing a central role in their students’ learning, either by way of facilitating access to its processes, or by happening in conjunction with the learning process.

The Space for Emotion in Learning

Despite the value the teachers placed on emotion’s role in learning, the teachers described widely varying degrees of support and space for recognizing and attending to emotion in their classroom. On one end of the spectrum, teachers reported working in communities where schoolwide efforts in SEL or mindfulness were already well underway. Caroline spoke to the benefits of feeling supported by a schoolwide effort, where the message is “This is what we are

doing. We value this as a school. We have bought into something that's saying, 'we're committed to this. We are doing this work daily'" (Interview, November 30, 2017). On the other extreme, teachers reported not having time or resources allotted to promoting students' emotional well-being and attending to its critical role in learning. Because our study featured veteran teachers, this discussion was often framed as a reflection on how the space available has changed over the course of their career. Brianna, a teacher with 28 years of experience, explains,

I've seen a lot of changes as far as – In the beginning, when I first started teaching when I was 24, I had a lot of freedom and we'd just find whatever on the playground. We could turn that into a whole lesson but now, I feel like there are certain things we are required just to study; that we have a big umbrella to teacher under. I think there are a lot of people who get really stressed out about teaching every single thing, thinking "Oh no, I don't have time to do it." (Interview, December 1, 2017).

Here, Brianna articulates how the space for the curriculum to emerge from shared experiences in the classroom has diminished.

Another veteran teacher, Eleanor, working in an elementary school known for its demanding academic curriculum, speaks to the pressure she has experienced, and how it has impacted the space for attending to students' emotions as they emerge in the course of a day in the classroom. She notes,

I cannot believe the things I am required to teach my students sometimes. They are eight and nine years old, and they're supposed to competently write argument essays and expository texts and narratives, and they're supposed to understand the distributive property. The content that we have pushed down in schools – I feel like that is how we sacrificed relationship. Because part of building relationships with my students for me, is being able to relax with them. Well, my kids will say I'm a really strict teacher, but it's personally because I'm this perfectionist. So I have all of these standards, and I'm required to do it, and I'm going to do it, and I'll do it well. And I'm sorry that I can't really sit here and talk to you about how we're feeling today because we really have to learn about the distributive property. So please be quiet. And then I become this person that's sort of divorced from their feelings because I'm like, "Got to get to this, got to get to that." So I need less to do, and until we get that more is not better, people, in the way of academics – and it's really about the academics in school. We have tried to raise our academic standards in the hopes of improving our achievement, and I think we've got it backwards. I really do. I think that kids need to have their emotional needs met first and

foremost, and if what we charged teachers with was to nurture them and care for them, and let's dial down the rigor." (Interview, December 8, 2017).

For Eleanor, there was a notable tension between adhering to the academic requirements outlined for her, and making space for what she felt was in the best interest of her students, specifically, recognition of their emotions and time to explore them. Additionally, both small and whole group discussions in two of the three sessions illuminated the varying emotional needs of their students, in addition to the varying roles of support. In reflecting on the experience, one teacher noted the urgency associated with our current political moment for Latino students in particular.

Carmen stated,

There are many students with PTSD, that come to my classroom with all of these deportations, or fear at home about being deported or just what is going to happen. I have many students whose dads are living in Mexico, and having problems right now in the neighborhood. Most of them live in San Juan, and it has become very violent, and they are observers of what is going on with drugs and gunshots sometimes, and fights within their own family members. And they come to school in fear, and I am not a psychologist, but I need the skills at least to make them feel safe in this environment." (Interview, November 16, 2017)

For both Carmen and Eleanor, two veteran teachers practicing in the same district, emotion is central to the learning process. However, the emotional needs of their students, and the difficulties they face in attending to them, are unique from one another. Eleanor's students face pressure to achieve academically, and have little time to attend to their stressors in the classroom. Carmen's students have been exposed to trauma, and their school is under increased pressure to perform well academically in order to continue to receive funding for bilingual education.

Carmen describes both her and her students being engaged in a process of survival, stating,

This school is growing fast. I think we are now around 600 students. And also growing is the pressure of not getting the scores that you need to support a bilingual program. So we are always kind of fighting for survival, fighting for continuing what I see as a right for my students – to preserve their mother tongue, as they are acquiring a second language. So for the staff members that work here, that is a big stress factor – the implications of the test scores, and comparing schools to schools. If you compare this school to another

school in the district whose population is mainly Anglo, even the socioeconomic level is going to be different and the scores are going to be different so for us, that is big work – to advocate for the program, to make it survive. (Interview, November 16, 2017).

While all students have emotional needs that require attention, Carmen describes being engaged in a process of survival with her students, which both limits the amount the amount of time they are able to devote to emotional well-being, and also places them at an increased need for it.

The Reciprocity of Emotion Between Teachers and Students

In the previous two sections we investigated how teachers characterized the role of emotion in their students' learning, and the space they have available to attend to it in their classrooms. In this section, we explore the ways in which teachers indicated an interconnectivity between teachers' and students' emotion. Returning to the reflection Carmen shared at the end of the last section, we see evidence of how her well-being was related to that of her students. The stressors she described, such as over the students' performance on standardized tests, were directly related to her students' well-being. She knew decreasing test scores could impact bilingual education, and she was personally invested in maintaining this opportunity for the good of her students. Additionally, in the sessions themselves, Carmen used the words *guilt* and *overwhelming* when describing her emotional responses to the trauma her students have experienced, indicating her belief that she is responsible for her students' emotional as well as academic well-being. In her interview, she describes this responsibility, stating "One commitment that I have is that I want their lives to be as happy as they can in this environment, because their personal lives are sometimes so heavy that if I can make them happier, I will" (Interview, November 16, 2017). Carmen is aware of the emotional load she carries on behalf of her students, noting that teachers are expected to be super people, to take on emotional burdens like those of a psychologist or a counselor, but are not trained to be able to filter emotions, as

they are in similar fields. Speaking to how her role as a teacher serves as a critical component of her identity, Carmen directly addresses how her students' well-being has a large impact on her well-being as a teacher. She states,

I choose to work here, and this is the only school I want to, but it makes me think too about how much being a teacher in this space is tied in with identity. In my head I'm wondering do these things feel more – like taking on the emotions of your students – I wonder if that's all tied in with that. But it's like, this is who I am. You know what? It is. I take it – everything – personally. Every single one of my students is important to me – and every teacher will say that. From my side, it truly is. I know their history. After working for 19 years, I know their grandpa is bringing me tamales for Christmas. Now I have children of my old students, and the thing is – I was talking about this with my husband – if I could be an instructor where I go and teach, and if I could not open my heart, I would not suffer so much. But on the other side, there's no way that I could survive as a teacher, without a connection with my students, because then the human part of my career will disappear, and there will be no reason to be." (November 16, 2017).

In this excerpt, Carmen describes many of the characteristics of an individual who is called to teach. Aligned with teaching as a vocation, Carmen identifies the draw she felt to teach in this school, and how it forms an important piece of her identity. It brings her personal fulfillment as well as pain, but acknowledges that being able to protect herself from the pain of her students' emotion and lived experience is not an option, as the human connection is essential to her answering the call to teach.

The influence of students' emotions on teacher well-being was not limited to Carmen; this theme was echoed in the additional interviews, as well as in the professional development sessions themselves. One additional source of evidence for this was the co-occurrence of the codes *Teacher Stress and Challenges* and *Student Stress and Challenges* in the interview and observation transcriptions. Over 90% of the excerpts coded with one of these codes was also coded for the other, indicating that when teachers discussed stress, it often implicated both teachers and students. Student stressors and teacher stressors were difficult to disentangle.

Additionally, the results of the the Malasch Burnout Inventory Educator Survey (Malasch, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986), taken prior to the beginning of the school and again in late November, confirmed this trend, wherein teachers reported feel less stressed at the beginning of the year, when they were preparing for welcoming students into the classroom, than they were in November, after three months with their students. Despite the fact that they now knew their students and had settled into routines in their classroom, their stress levels had risen.

Additionally, the interview data indicated that this relationship also works in the other direction, wherein teachers described situations in which their emotional responses impacted their students. While we do not know if the students would agree with these characterizations, what is relevant to this study is that the teachers perceived that their emotional responses impacted their students' emotional well-being, in much the same way as they are impacted by their students. As Carmen explains,

One thing I have learned since I started mindfulness like three years ago – and that's why I think it's very important for teachers is that I don't want to become that teacher that sometimes you can hear from room to room. Especially, what I have observed is that when I raise my voice, because I am upset, I can see their faces looking at me. And this girl was in front of me, and if I was raising my voice a little bit more than normal, her face told me everything I need to understand. (Interview, November 16, 2017)

In this example, Carmen articulates how she sees her expressions of anger or frustration in particular impacting her students' emotional well-being. She describes an example that has stuck with her, one in which she yelled, and saw how her expression of anger resulted in a facial expression from one of her students, which as Carmen goes on to explain, she interpreted to be a sign of fear or sadness.

While we don't have student-level to confirm whether the reciprocity of emotion that these teachers described is also felt by students, for the purposes of considering what the

implications are for PD, it is the teachers' perceptions of how their emotions are interrelated with those of their students that matter most.

Implications for the Design of Professional Development Focused on Emotional Well-Being

The veteran vocational teachers who participated in the professional development sequence demonstrated how their emotional well-being was related to their students'. Considering teachers' and students' well-being as separate entities did not speak to the reality of these teachers' experience, who approached them as interrelated not only in theory, but also in practice. If teachers view their emotions as intertwined with those of their students, then it is important for as teacher educators to honor this framing, and follow their lead in viewing them as interrelated processes. On a theoretical level, we can conceptualize this in a manner similar to emotional thought, where teacher and student emotion are mutually constituted. Immordino-Yang & Damasio (2007)'s conceptualization of emotional thought, which captures the interrelationship between emotional and cognition in thinking and learning, could serve as a helpful heuristic. What would it look like if we were to approach teacher and student emotion as a shared entity in the same manner? How might we design professional developments that attend to teacher social and emotional well-being, student social and emotional well-being, *and* the interrelationship of the two? In conceptualizing how this could be described, we might consider Carmen's description of her open heart as a metaphor or image. She stated, "if I could not open my heart, I would not suffer so much. But on the other side, there's no way that I could survive as a teacher, without a connection with my students, because then the human part of my career will disappear, and there will be no reason to be" (Interview, November 16, 2017).

Practical considerations that stem from honoring this interrelated process in the design of professional development are outlined below, followed by a brief summary of additional recommendations the teachers named directly.

- The scope of a professional development session dedicated to social emotional development should not be limited to either teacher or student well-being. Rather, both topics should be intentionally included in the material discussed, and discussion of the ways in which they are mutually constitutive encouraged if taken up by teachers.
- Facilitators should be prepared to move freely between discussing either student or teacher well-being, rather than dividing the time into two distinct halves.
- Practices introduced in the session should be applicable to both the teachers in the session and their students, such that teachers are able to replicate the same activities with the students in the classroom.
- Space needs to be included for teachers' emotions as they emerge in the learning process, just as we are encouraging them to attend to their students' emotions in the moment. Plan intentionally, but with flexibility, such that emotion can emerge.

The teachers themselves named several additional recommendations for professional development sessions centered on social emotional well-being. Echoing several of the characteristics of effective professional development outlined by Garet et al. (2001), the teachers participating in the interviews suggested the following guidelines for ensuring that the practices introduced have the capacity to be transformative and sustainable:

- The practices need to be institutionally supported with respect to time, resources, and administrative investment.
- The practices need to be responsive to student demographics and local needs.
- The professional development needs to include a component of ongoing support.

Conclusion

Recognizing and attending to the role of emotion in teachers' practice is essential to both reducing teacher attrition and equipping them with the tools necessary to aid their students'

social emotional development. For practicing teachers, the most prevalent format for learning new material is professional development. However, what we know about best practices for professional development are rarely accommodated in the current format. What the findings showed with respect to teachers' recommendations for future professional developments largely mirrored the literature around best practice, emphasizing elements such as the opportunity to engage in and with practices and materials directly, and a community of ongoing support. In addition to providing further evidence of the import of these practices to teachers, this study also illuminated the ways in which teacher and student emotion were conceptually related for the veteran, vocationally oriented teachers participating in this study. Further study is warranted to determine whether this interrelationship of teacher and student emotion is evident for other teachers in other communities. In particular, it is worth considering to what degree the ways this group of teachers were impacted by their students' emotions and saw them as interrelated with their own because they viewed their profession as a vocation, or whether this conceptualization of the interrelationship of teacher and student emotion applies to teachers who view their practice in other ways, such as as a career, job, occupation, or work.

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CONCLUSION

The three articles in this dissertation addressed a tension between the recognition of the import of emotion to the process of learning and identity, and the limited amount of space that is given for it to emerge authentically in learning environments. In the first article, a conceptual piece titled *Toward an Expansive Approach to Social Emotional Learning: Considering the Role of Emotion in Equity-Oriented Teaching and Learning*, I highlighted tensions between SEL's foundational theories, which speak to the necessity of collaboration, community, and relationships in school settings, and the way it is most commonly practiced, via stand-alone programming that emphasizes the attainment of individual skills such as self-awareness and self-management. I addressed two other critiques of the current framework, namely, a lack of attention to the ways in which the skills and behaviors promoted reflect white, middle-class norms and values, and the concern that SEL is being used as a means of controlling individual students' emotions and behaviors. I argue that SEL holds great promise for attending to the role of emotion in learning, but that its current framework is not structured to support all of our students, and to move towards greater equity we must acknowledge the unspoken elements of its framing. It currently relies on a perspective of learning that is more closely aligned with the cognitivist tradition than a sociocultural one. This doesn't make sense if we want to explore the topic at hand with any degree of authenticity – social and emotional learning must be embedded in authentic social interaction and identity exploration. To address this, I proposed a framework for an expansive and embedded approach to SEL that draws on sociocultural theory that is organized around three domains: *identity and self; the other in relationship; and humanizing structures of management and organization*. In proposing this reframing, I aimed to provide one

means of how we might organize an approach to SEL that is organized around authentic interaction and self-exploration.

The second article, *On Belonging: Children Respond to Trump through Play and the Imagination*, provides an example of how deeply young children already are engaging with issues of equity and justice, and experiencing deep and authentic emotional responses to their circumstances. The article responds to the common conceptualization of young children as being in a perpetual state of becoming, and not full beings in their own right. In this article, we demonstrate how even young students are extremely aware of and emotionally impacted by injustices perpetuated against communities they are members of. We push back against the idea that children need to be protected from explorations of identity and equity, arguing that students already are aware of and engaged with these topics. However, the format in which young children explore issues of equity, identity, and social interaction is unique from that of adults. In this article, we argue that play is the language children are naturally using to make sense of the norms, structures, and hierarchies in the adult world. As we describe in the findings, the children used interpretive reproduction as a means of responding to Trump's campaign and his characterization of them as Mexicans as well as to explore broader questions of what it means to live in a pluralistic society, highlighting the ways in which play can be used as a means of attending to SEL in context. If we want to engage with children's emotions authentically in the service of equity-oriented teaching and learning, then we need to enter the space in which they are already doing this work – through play and imagination.

In the third article of the dissertation, I examined the role of emotion in teachers' practice. I analyzed the teachers' interview responses against the characteristics of a vocation and identified the way in which this small group of participating veteran teachers viewed teaching as

a central component of their identity – they were called to it, and couldn't imagine doing anything else. It was a part of who they were. This had implications for how the teachers viewed the role of emotion in the processes of teaching and learning – namely, that the teachers largely viewed their own emotions as directly related to the well-being of their students – and for how we in turn design professional developments for teachers centered on emotional well-being.

These articles collectively attend to the role of emotion in learning, with a particular emphasis on the role of emotion in equity-oriented teaching and learning. They each address a tension between a real or perceived limit on the time and space afforded for authentic emotion to emerge and the desire to attend to it. Currently the most common approaches to SEL do not address the needs of a diverse population, but time in schools for exploring emotion is limited, and the current model fits easily into the structure of the school day. Similarly, limits are placed on children regarding what topics are deemed appropriate, but what happens when children are prevented from addressing and emotionally responding to consequential issues that they are actively contending with outside of school? The same consideration can be explored with respect to teachers' emotional well-being. How might we manifest a commitment to attending to teachers' own social emotional development?

Through this dissertation study, I aimed to consider the way in which emotion is constituted and framed in three areas of educational research and practice: the curricular domain of SEL, play theory and childhood studies, and teacher education. My analysis contributes to conversations in each of these domains which acknowledge the very real steps that have been made with respect to acknowledging the important role of emotion to learning, and for creating space for its inclusion. At the same time, the spaces we have allotted for emotion in education are inadequate. They attempt to confine emotion to a pre-determined place and time, effectively

restricting its use and expression, and this runs contrary to the knowledge that emotion and cognition work in tandem in service of learning. If we truly want to make space for emotional thought in education, we need to allow for its emergence at both planned and unanticipated junctures. It is my hope that we can collectively consider ways of flexibly planning in a way that allows for authentic emotional exploration to occur in situ. I intend to further contribute to this area of research through continuing investigations of the role of play and imagination in attending to emotion as it emerges, particularly for young children and the teachers that learn and play with them.

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