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PROMOTING SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
IN UPWARD BOUND

A Dissertation in
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by
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Abstract

This study explores how essential socio-emotional skills can be made more salient in programs serving disadvantaged adolescents. Socio-emotional skills encompass five competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Compensatory education programs for children recognize the importance of these skills in achieving academic success in K-12 and beyond. Therefore, early childhood programs, such as Head Start, have sought to incorporate teaching socio-emotional skills as have educators in primary schools. While there have been studies investigating efforts to incorporate socio-emotional skills in programs inside the school setting, much less is known about how compensatory secondary education programs outside the school setting incorporate socio-emotional learning. This study is aimed at examining how socio-emotional learning may be incorporated for secondary students participating in a compensatory education program. Specifically, the dissertation examines the incorporation of socio-emotional learning opportunities in Upward Bound, a federally-funded program designed to aid disadvantaged high school students throughout their high school years and in preparation for postsecondary education. In this case study of the summer program of Upward Bound, I focus on two questions: (1) how Upward Bound understands socio-emotional learning in their summer program and (2) how the Upward Bound staff promotes socio-emotional learning opportunities. The study entails 46 interviews with program staff and observations of classroom activities and other team building activities over eight weeks. The analysis suggest that socio-emotional learning is incorporated into the program, though this is not done in a direct manner. Moreover, staff members retain the autonomy to implement socio-emotional learning based on their best judgments. The study concludes with suggestions for strengthening the incorporation of socio-emotional learning opportunities.
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Mother, this is for you. I take comfort in knowing you are with me every step of the way, for matter can neither be destroyed nor created, only transformed.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Chapter One presents an introduction to this case study of promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities in an Upward Bound (UB) Program within the context of the federal program’s policy. I first provide background on the importance of socio-emotional learning to academic success. Then, I discuss the statement of the problem, followed by the purpose of this study and the research questions. After this, I present the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of this study. I then discuss the significance of this study and my research identity and assumptions. Finally, I provide definitions to key phrases that I will be using the remainder of the dissertation.

At the outset, it is important to note what content falls within and beyond the study’s scope. This case study examines a UB summer program staff’s efforts to foster socio-emotional learning opportunities during the program’s six-week summer academy. I do not assess how successful the staff’s efforts were in actually helping students acquire socio-emotional skills or how much the students learned before or after the program; I only focus on understanding the staff’s efforts. The word “efforts” is defined broadly in this dissertation to include any steps taken toward helping students grow their socio-emotional skills.

Background

Education policies that foster socio-emotional learning are crucial because socio-emotional well-being is fundamental for academic and life success. Children who exhibit higher socio-emotional competence in kindergarten are more likely to graduate high school and college, hold stable, full-time jobs, and be more civically engaged, while being less likely to commit crimes, require government assistance, have substance use dependency,
and suffer from mental health problems (Belfield et al., 2015; Hawkins, Kosterman, Catalano, Hill, & Abbott, 2008). Socio-emotional well-being is also linked to increased self-efficacy, higher confidence, empathy, greater commitment to school, a sense of purpose, pro-social behaviors, reduced behavioral problems, decreased emotional distress, improved test scores and grades, and reduced absenteeism (Belfield et al., 2015; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). Some researchers even suggest that socio-emotional skills may be more important to academic success than cognitive abilities as measured by IQ tests (Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua, 2006; Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001).

In contrast, students with impaired socio-emotional learning often experience long-term negative academic consequences (Ou & Reynolds, 2014). For example, students with lower socio-emotional competence often have lower grades (Parker, Austin, Hogan, Wood, & Bond, 2005a; Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan, Majeski, 2004b) and lower rates of retention (Parker, Hogan, Eastabrook, Oke, & Wood, 2006).

Recognizing the importance of socio-emotional well-being, education entities across the United States have adopted policies that promote socio-emotional learning. For example, over the years, Head Start has broadened its program policies to include social and emotional development for the pre-schoolers it serves (Head Start, 2018). Its policy includes goals regarding children’s relationships with adults and other children, emotional functioning, and fostering a sense of identity and belonging. The rationale for these policy goals is clear and in line with the literature: “Positive social and emotional development in the early years provides a critical foundation for lifelong development and learning” (Head Start, 2018).
Statement of the Problem

Not all children have an opportunity to fully develop the socio-emotional skills that can aid them in their academic careers. For example, children who experience complex trauma often manifest developmental setbacks in acquiring socio-emotional skills. Complex trauma is defined as a child’s exposure to multiple, chronic adverse experiences and the developmental impacts of such experiences (Complex Trauma, n.d.; Kliesthermes, 2014). Without a sound support system, adverse childhood experiences activate the child’s stress response system for prolonged periods and overburden the child’s coping mechanism. An overburdened coping mechanism hampers a child’s ability to develop appropriately, including developing their socio-emotional skills (see DeCarlo Santiago, Wadsworth, & Stump, 2011; Evans & Kim, 2013; Wadsworth, Raviv, Reinhard, Wolff, DeCarlo Santiago, & Einhorn, 2008).

Living in poverty for prolonged periods can expose children and youth to complex trauma. This is because poverty often co-occurs with a wide range of adverse experiences, including neighborhood violence and child abuse and neglect.1 Exposure to poverty and its related stressors often contribute to lower academic achievement. This poverty-achievement gap is a persistent and robust trend in education research (Reardon, 2011; Sirin, 2005).

To counter some of the negative academic outcomes of children living in poverty, the federal government created Upward Bound in 1965, as a postsecondary compensatory education program. Under federal policy, the United States Department of Education provides grants to fund UB Programs, which are designed to assist youth from

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1 A more thorough discussion on poverty and its related stressors is found in Chapter Two.
disadvantaged backgrounds acquire the skills and motivation necessary to succeed in secondary and postsecondary education. Along with grant money, the federal UB policy outlines required and permissible services that the program must and can provide the students participating in the program throughout any calendar year.

**Purpose of the Study**

Given the importance of socio-emotional skills to academic success and the federal UB policy aim to prepare disadvantaged students for secondary and postsecondary success, this study seeks to understand how the UB summer program staff conceptualize socio-emotional skills and how they implement socio-emotional learning opportunities. This understanding can, in turn, help identify areas of strengths and gaps in implementation.

The purpose of the study is divided into three categories as described in Maxwell (2005): intellectual, practical, and personal. First, my intellectual goal is to understand how the UB Program conceptualizes socio-emotional skills and promotes socio-emotional learning opportunities during its UB summer academy. This study then adds to the literature on the fostering of socio-emotional learning opportunities in compensatory education programs in particular and in education entities in general. It also furthers the education field’s knowledge of the functioning of federal education programs, such as UB.

Second, at a practical level, my goal is to help the program coordinators improve the summer program. I will share my results with the director and other UB summer program administrators. I will also discuss specific ways the program leaders can improve the summer program.

Third, on a personal note, this project allows me to work toward finding solutions for children who grow up facing substantial adversity. I joined the field of education policy
to better the opportunities for disadvantaged students through equitable education policies, while recognizing that solutions must also come from other areas of public policy. This study helps me work toward that goal.

**Research Questions**

Two questions are central to this study. The first is: “How does the UB Program staff conceptualize socio-emotional skills?” The aim of this question is to understand the summer staff’s perspectives, assumptions, and knowledge about socio-emotional skills in the course of their work in the summer program. The second question focuses on implementation: “How does the UB Program staff promote socio-emotional learning opportunities during the summer program?” The aim of the second question is to shed light on the intricacies of implementing socio-emotional learning opportunities given federal and local policy aims for the UB Program.

**Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe a conceptual framework as “the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs your research” through key concepts “and the relationships among them” (p. 33). Maxwell (2005) adds that the conceptual framework is useful for helping the researcher apply theory while not restricting the study by it. In this section, I describe the concepts that inform my research and the relationships among them.

Two theories underpin my study, Cohen and Moffitt’s (2009) theory of policy and practice and Bronfenbrenner’s (2006) bioecological theory of human development. In this study, the latter serves as a tool to identify the gaps and strengths in the UB Program staff’s efforts to promote development of socio-emotional skills. The former helps explain why the
program staff is able to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities and why there may be gaps in those efforts. I begin with a discussion of the dilemma between policy and practice (see Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Then, I discuss the bioecological theory in relation to helping youth develop socio-emotional skills, identifying the ecological systems in place and the interactions among these. Finally, I briefly discuss how the concept of capability is a helpful tool in interpreting the study’s results.

**Policy and Implementation**

Policy is several steps removed from practice, but to implement policy is to close the gap between policy and practice (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). The relationship between policy and practice is symbiotic. Policy influences practice as much as practice influences what policy means.

**Policy level.** At the policy level, policy makers define problems and design remedies to address these problems (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). In designing these remedies, policy makers choose what policy instruments are most adequate to address the problem, for example mandates, funds, or incentives. Cohen and Moffitt (2009) refer to these policy instruments as the capability that policy brings to practice. The choice of policy instruments depends on the policy makers’ values and views. The effectiveness of these policy instruments depends on whether practitioners are equipped to implement the policy given the policy instruments (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). To illustrate, mandates to improve student test scores are likely to be less effective if educators lack the necessary resources to help students improve their scores. Similarly, policies that deploy funds as policy instruments but offer little guidance as to how to spend the funds to achieve the policy aims will largely be ineffective in ameliorating the problem the policy intends to solve.
Implementation level. At the practice end, practitioners and the social environment bring resources to the policy (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). More specifically, practitioners bring individual capabilities: personal values, interests, skill and knowledge, and dispositions. These are personal characteristics that influence the practitioners’ will and motivation to implement the policy’s aims. Similarly, the environment also brings capabilities to the policy, such as resources that facilitate knowledge dispersion within an organization. For example, school districts that are underfunded lack environmental resources to build and disseminate knowledge about how to work productively with students from disadvantaged backgrounds (see Cohen & Moffitt, 2009).

The tension between policy and implementation. Given this background, how well practitioners can implement a policy depends on how well the policy aims and instruments fit with the capabilities at the practice level (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Aims that are too vague or too ambitious often cause a rift between the policy and the implementation, because practitioners will have difficulties interpreting and understanding the policy aims. Practitioners cannot implement what they do not understand. Similarly, practitioners who lack individual capability, for example their skill and knowledge are inadequate due to inadequate training, are unlikely to know how to achieve the policy’s aims even if they understand the aims. This tension and distance between policy and implementation is what Cohen and Moffitt (2009) call a dilemma that, fortunately, can be managed by clarifying the policy and building capability.

Policy and practice: UB policy. Applying these concepts to the UB Program policy will help illustrate the potential tension between policy and practice in this federal policy and potential ways for such tension to be resolved.
Defining the problem. In designing the UB Program policy, the policy makers recognized that poverty has negative effects on disadvantaged youth's academic achievement. A great deal of research supports this proposition (see, e.g., Reardon, 2011; Sirin, 2005).

Poverty often exposes developing youth to multiple, often co-occurring poverty-related stressors—for example neighborhood violence and crime—emblematic of complex trauma. This exposure can undermine socio-emotional development (Evans & Kim, 2013; DeCarlo Santiago, Wadsworth, & Stump, 2011; Wadsworth, Raviv, Reinhard, Wolff, DeCarlo Santiago, & Einhorn, 2008). In turn, lower socio-emotional competence contributes to lower academic achievement (see, e.g., Keefer, Parker, Wood, 2012; Parker et al., 2005a; Parker et al., 2004a; Parker et al., 2006). These lower levels of academic achievement are what the policies makers hoped to help remedy when they adopted the UB Program policy, a policy focused on helping youth acquire the necessary skills to succeed in secondary and post-secondary education.

Devising a remedy: The Upward Bound policy and its instruments. Federal policy makers devised the UB Program policy in 1965 with the aim of helping youth living in poverty to acquire the skills necessary to succeed in secondary and postsecondary schooling. To meet this aim, the policy provides several instruments. First, the policy offers grant money to organizations that are willing and able to support skill development in students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition to grant money, the policy stipulates that the organizations must provide mandated services, such as academic tutoring. It also lists permissible services that organizations may choose to provide, such as
exposing students to cultural events. The policy also describes how each program should organize itself.

**Policy implementation.** Ultimately, the implementation of the UB policy’s aim depends on the individual and environmental capabilities at the practice level (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Individuals bring personal characteristics that make them more or less willing to work toward the policy aims. More specifically, practitioners’ values, interests, skill and knowledge, and dispositions influence how they work toward improving the UB Program participants’ skills. As for the social sources, the program’s organization and the environment aid or hinder the policy implementation via greater or lesser capabilities for knowledge dispersion and other resources. Social sources of capability vary among UB Programs, given that programs are located in different geographic locations across the United States and that UB staff retain substantial discretion regarding the program’s operation during the summer, within the policy boundaries.

**Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Theory**

To understand and identify the components that should theoretically be in place to help the students develop their socio-emotional skills in the UB Program, I draw on Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development. Although this is a case study of policy implementation, the theory is appropriate because it helps examine human development, including the development of socio-emotional skills. It does so by taking proximal and distal environmental features and their interactions into account. The theory considers not only the developing person’s immediate environment but also policies that are distal to the students that nonetheless influence development. In this sense, the bioecological theory helps identify the different pieces that, in theory, should be in place to
promote socio-emotional learning during the six-week summer academy. It is through this theoretical lens that I identify the strengths and gaps in fostering socio-emotional learning opportunities in the UB summer program.

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development draws attention to four different systems that interact with each other to further or hinder human development: process, person, context, and time. What follows next are the specific tenets of the bioecological theory.

**Process.** Processes, or the quality of all of the interactions between the developing person and the person’s immediate environment, are important for development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). For example, the quality of the interactions between a mother and a toddler is important in furthering child development. In this study, the quality of the staff-student interactions were the central interactions I examined.

One of the chief predictors of socio-emotional learning and student academic success is the quality of the interactions between those promoting socio-emotional learning and the students (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2015). To illustrate, students who report having a teacher who listens to them, helps them make important decisions, and supports student autonomy perform better than those students who do not report similar experiences (CASEL, 2015). The quality of these teacher-student interactions may influence student outcomes years after the teacher-student interactions occur. A study by Hamre and Pianta (2001) found that positive kindergarten teacher-relationships were associated with positive academic outcomes later in middle school.
The quality of the interactions also partially depends on personal characteristics of the people involved in the interaction and on an environment that supports or hinders socio-emotional learning. Ten non-exhaustive teacher practices are most effective in improving the quality of the interactions that promote students’ socio-emotional learning: (1) student-centered discipline, (2) teacher language, (3) responsibility and choice, (4) warmth and support, (5) cooperative learning, (6) classroom discussions, (7) self-reflection and self-assessment, (8) balanced instruction, (9) academic press and expectations, and (10) competence building—modeling, practicing, feedback, and coaching (Yoder, 2014). Although these are teacher practices, in this study, I examined whether these ten practices, or variations thereof, were present in the staff-student interactions.

**Person.** In Bronfenbrenner’s theory, the focus on the “person” refers to a focus on persons’ characteristics that influence development. As mentioned above, the personal characteristics of the developing person and of the people in the person's immediate environment influence the quality of their interactions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). An individual's personal characteristics can help initiate or end interactions. For example, being impulsive or withdrawn will influence how a person interacts with others in the person’s immediate surroundings. Other characteristics, such as gender, weight, age, ability, knowledge, and beliefs also influence the quality of interactions. Finally, personal characteristics can also elicit a response from the social environment. For example, a cranky child who cries often may elicit more attention from caregivers, which influences the quality of the interactions, including how long the interactions may last.

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2 I briefly discuss person characteristics and environmental context in this section but will describe both at length below, under the person characteristics and context facets of the theory.
In this study, I focused on the staff’s personal characteristics not the students’ personal characteristics. More specifically, I examined the staff members’ socio-emotional competence, including how they engaged with other staff and students, and how the staff described their frustrations. I also examined how the trainings may have increased the staff’s socio-emotional competence and the quality of the staff-student relationships.

**Staff’s Socio-Emotional Competence.** The summer staff’s socio-emotional competence is important for several reasons. Teachers’ socio-emotional competence affects the quality of teacher-student relationships, quality of classroom environment, and teachers’ ability to model socio-emotional competence for the students (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). Teachers with high levels of socio-emotional competence exhibit high self-, cultural-, and social awareness, exhibit prosocial behavior, can manage their relationships, emotions, and behavior in healthy ways, and exhibit lower levels of stress (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). I hypothesized that UB staff members who exhibited high socio-emotional competence would likely derive benefits similar to those of teachers with high socio-emotional competence. Thus, in this study, during interviews, I sought to ascertain whether the staff members exhibited any of the socio-emotional skills and in interviews asked staff members to describe their level of stress and frustration.

**Staff-Student Relationships.** Strong positive relationships between caregivers and children are vital for socio-emotional development (Whitted, 2011). Studies have found negative teacher-student relationships in kindergarten are predictors of academic and behavioral problems in middle school (Hamre & Pianta, 2001), while strong positive relationships where teachers have high expectations of their students can increase the students’ academic success (Rosenthal & Jacobsen, 1968). Such findings led me to explore
the quality of relationships between the UB staff and students. To do so, I asked the staff members about their perception of their relationships with the students and observed how the staff approached their interactions with the students.

**Modeling Socio-Emotional Competence.** Educators can promote and enhance students’ socio-emotional competence by modeling appropriate behaviors (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Educators and staff members who model socio-emotional learning skills create a climate conducive to learning socio-emotional skills (CASEL, 2015). In this study, I examined, via observations, whether the staff members modeled the socio-emotional skills they sought to teach the students and whether the staff modeled any of the five socio-emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2015).

**Training.** Training on student socio-emotional learning and staff’s socio-emotional competence increases the staff’s awareness about the importance of socio-emotional learning, how to promote socio-emotional learning, and how to increase the staff’s own socio-emotional competence (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In this study, I identified any staff training sessions available, and I attended these to gain a better understanding of what the staff learned in relation to student socio-emotional learning and staff socio-emotional competence.

**Context.** Contextual factors, found in the immediate and more distal environments, can also influence human development. In this study, contextual factors most immediate to the students were the environments of the classroom and residential halls where the staff interacted with the students.
A supportive immediate environment contributes to the quality of the staff-student interactions. A meta-analysis of compensatory education programs identified a set of four environment qualities that foster the development of students’ socio-emotional learning. These four are known as “S.A.F.E.” strategies: (CASEL, 2015; Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010)—Sequenced: use of connected, coordinated activities that support SEL across the program; Active: use active learning to teach socio-emotional skills; Focused: dedication of time, resources, and a plan to develop socio-emotional skills; Explicit: targeting of particular socio-emotional skills.

Further research has added a fifth element: reflection (Walker, Olson, & Herman, 2017). The reflection component refers to a program’s inclusion of opportunities for students to reflect on socio-emotional learning and the socio-emotional skills the students have learned. The rationale for the fifth element is that reflection allows students to internalize socio-emotional learning. In this study, the S.A.F.E.R. strategies informed my interview and observation protocols.

More distal from the developing person are the interactions that happen among the different immediate environments, for example the interaction between a child’s school, home, and church. In my study, this level of context was represented by the interaction between the summer program staff and the students’ families, to the extent the interaction was present. Cooperation between families and staff is important, because student socio-emotional learning is most effective when socio-emotional learning extends from the school to the home (Albright & Weissberg, 2010; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2007). Even though the UB Program is not a school, it promotes academic learning similar to schools. Positive interactions between the program staff and families can include surveying parents
about their preferences of communication and socio-emotional practices, involving or highlighting the caregivers’ own child in the communication, remaining positive and communicating respect in any communication with the families, sharing the program policies and practices with the families, and creating program-home journals or folders where the program staff can maintain ongoing communication with the families (Albright, Weissberg, & Dusenbury, 2011).

Even more distal are environments in which the developing person is not involved or present but which nevertheless influence the developing person. For example, a parent’s hostile work environment may influence the parent-child interactions. In this study, I accounted for this system through the analysis of staff-staff interactions, including training and the climate among staff members, which had the potential to foster socio-emotional learning. Positive school climate, which is also conducive to socio-emotional learning, is created in part through collaboration amongst staff members. Districts and schools that foster school climates that support socio-emotional learning significantly strengthen the impact of socio-emotional learning outcomes (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Positive school climate also increases academic performance (National School Climate Council, 2007). Moreover, schools with supportive relationships where educators share common goals and norms and work together to achieve these goals see students who perform better academically and experience fewer behavioral problems (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Again, I used these principles to examine whether and how staff-staff interactions and, potentially, program climate, influenced the staff-student interactions in this case study.
Finally, most distal from the developing person are broad social influences such as government laws, regulations, and policies that nonetheless influence development. In this study, I examined the laws and regulations that governed the summer program. The law and regulations set aims, program mandates, and permissible program activities (20 U.S.C. 1070a-13). These, in turn, influence the socio-emotional components that the summer program included and the extent to which the program emphasized or not on any of the components.

**Time.** According to the bioecological theory, time also influences development. More specifically, high-quality interactions that take place uninterrupted and are consistent across a period of time are most helpful to a person’s development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In this study, I examined whether the staff provided socio-emotional learning opportunities consistently during the six-week period and whether anyone or anything interrupted the socio-emotional learning opportunities.

**Policy and Implementation Revisited**

After identifying the strengths and gaps in the quality of interactions, person characteristics, context, and time systems, as defined in the bioecological theory, I use Cohen and Moffitt’s (2009) concept of capabilities to interpret the gaps and strengths. That is, in the discussion section in Chapter Five, I consider which individual and environmental capabilities might be in place to help the staff members promote socio-emotional learning opportunities during the six-week program. I also provide a possible explanation as to why the UB staff members are seemingly able to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities, even though gaps are present and the capabilities at the practice level may be less than optimal.
Significance of the Study

This study is intended to contribute to the knowledge base about how compensatory high school education programs can implement socio-emotional learning comprehensively, that is promoting all five competencies. Given that UB’s purpose is to promote academic success, and that socio-emotional learning is crucial to academic and future success, further understanding of how the program may incorporate socio-emotional learning opportunities and the potential challenges in doing so is merited. The results of this case study will inform education policy about the needs, as well as potential challenges and successes, in incorporating socio-emotional learning opportunities in compensatory education programs for high school students.

Researcher Identity and Assumptions

I grew up in Webb County, Texas, one of the poorest counties in the country. While I experienced poverty, many of its related stressors, and its repercussions, I exhibited great resilience throughout my developmental years, just like many children who grow up in poverty do. I did not find academic success to be an insurmountable challenge in my life. At an early age, I tested into my school district’s gifted and talented program, which follows the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students. The gifted and talented program gave me the opportunity to join a different academic track and to take advanced courses at earlier ages than most of my peers. This background prepared me for college.

I recognize I am in a place of relative privilege compared to some study participants and student program participants, which might make it difficult to understand some of the experiences of staff and students and their approach to education and learning. At the same time, my background may allow me to relate to some of the students’ issues. Throughout
the study, I remained cognizant of my background to minimize bias and remain open to alternative interpretations.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are used frequently in this dissertation. I define them here to facilitate reading this dissertation.

**Socio-emotional skills or competencies**: “the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2017).

**Socio-emotional learning**: the process through which children and adults acquire socio-emotional skills (CASEL, 2017).

**Relationship skills**: “The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed” (CASEL, 2017).

**Responsible decision-making**: “The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others” (CASEL, 2017).

**Social awareness**: “The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports” (CASEL, 2017).
**Self-management:** "The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations—effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals" (CASEL, 2017).

**Self-awareness:** “The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a ‘growth mindset’” (CASEL, 2017).
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Poverty-Achievement Nexus

The Negative Effects of Poverty on Academic Achievement

Education policy makers and researchers have long recognized and extensively documented that children living in poverty have lower levels of academic achievement. While several studies early in the twentieth century documented the academic achievement gap between students from lower and higher socioeconomic status, (e.g., Cuff, 1933), the 1966 Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966) marked the beginning of an increased interest in the study of the poverty achievement gap (Powers, Fischman, & Berliner, 2016). The Coleman Report drew increased attention to the importance of students’ backgrounds in understanding student achievement, concluding: “Inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighborhood, and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school” (Coleman et al., 1966, p. 325).

A proliferation of studies examining the shortcomings that students from impoverished backgrounds face followed. For example, according to this large body of research, compared to students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, students from lower socioeconomic status often have lower reading achievement levels in primary and secondary school (Lambert, 1970; So & Chan, 1984), score lower in statewide primary and secondary standardized tests in language arts, math, written composition, science, and social studies (Caldas, 1993; see also, Jimerson, Egeland, & Teo, 1999; Sutton & Soderstrom, 1999; Walker, Greenwood, Hart, Carta, 1994), have lower verbal abilities, both receptive and spoken, along with lower scores in national standardized tests (Walker, Greenwood,
Hart, Carta, 1994), and enroll in and attain postsecondary degrees at lower rates than students from higher socioeconomic status (Eagle, 1989).

The negative impact of poverty extends to students’ peers. For example, peers’ socioeconomic status influences high school students’ standardized test scores in math, English language arts, and written composition; students whose peers come from a lower socioeconomic status score lower (Caldas & Bankston III, 1997; see also Coleman et al., 1966). A meta-analysis at the turn of the 21st century, examined studies from 1990 to 2000 to study the relationship between poverty and academic achievement (Sirin, 2005). The researcher found support for the robust and persistent trend in education research: students from impoverished backgrounds have lower academic achievement levels than students from wealthier backgrounds.

The poverty achievement gap has persisted throughout the decades. In fact, this gap has not only persisted but widened between 1951 and 2001 (Reardon, 2011). In 2011, Reardon examined data from nineteen nationally representative studies (e.g., National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, and the Education Longitudinal Study). He sought to determine whether the achievement gap between children in low-income families and high-income families had widened between 1951 and 2001 as the income gap between low- and high-income families had widened. His findings show that the poverty achievement gap grew steadily between these years:

The achievement gap between children from high- and low-income families is roughly 30 to 40 percent larger among children born in 2001 than among those born twenty-five years earlier. In fact, it appears that the income achievement gap has been growing steadily for at least fifty years, though the data are less certain for cohorts of children born before 1970. (Reardon, 2011, p. 4)
Besides this key finding, Reardon also found that (1) the income achievement gap is now nearly twice as large as the achievement gap between Black and White students, (2) the income achievement gap is large when children enter kindergarten and appears to remain steady throughout the children’s academic trajectory, and (3) though income inequality in the United States has been growing during the last 50 years as well, the income gap does not appear to be the dominant factor responsible for the income achievement gap. Other factors contributing to the widening gap include the increased parental investment in cognitive development of children from higher-income families. In sum, students from impoverished backgrounds often underperform academically compared to their counterparts (e.g., Murnane, 2007; Reardon, 2011; Sirin, 2005).

Understanding the Poverty-Achievement Nexus

Understanding the mechanisms and causal links behind the poverty-achievement nexus is complex. While Reardon (2011) finds parental investment in children with higher income families can explain part of the gap, the causes behind the poverty-achievement gap remain a topic of debate. Different researchers have tried to explain the relationship between poverty and low academic achievement with theories that draw from hereditary to environmental factors. The arguments explaining the causal mechanisms behind the poverty-achievement nexus can fall broadly within three non-exclusive categories: (1) the role of hereditary traits, (2) a focus on a lack of resources, and (3) a focus on child and youth developmental setbacks.

Hereditary traits. In the early twentieth century, several researchers argued that the differences in intelligence, as defined by Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests, and poverty were mapped to hereditary traits and believed these traits were immutable (e.g., Terman,
1926; see also, Stern, 2005). The cadre of researchers who held this view included influential scholars such as Edward Thorndike. The view that differences in intelligence were explained by genetic traits dominated the education field well into the 1940s (Travers, 1983). That is not to say that the view went unchallenged during this period—for example, John Dewey argued that this view ignored the students’ individuality (see, Dewey, 1922)—but rather that the view occupied an established place in the social science field and was well accepted at the time. Arguments that hereditary traits contribute to poverty and IQ scores resurfaced in arguments by Jensen (1969) and Herrnstein and Murray (1994).

Lack of resources. Many researchers suggest that a lack of resources is largely responsible for the poverty achievement gap. The lack of resources to some of the most basic necessities can be so gaping that children living in poverty do not have a realistic opportunity to succeed in the face of often insurmountable challenges (Gorski, 2013). For this reason, the achievement gap is sometimes more accurately referred to as the “opportunity gap” (see, e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2013; Gorski, 2013; Murnane, 2007).

Children living in poverty lack access to some of the most basic resources inside and outside schools. Outside of the school, children in poverty often lack access to high-quality health care (Bloom, Dey, & Freeman, 2006; Fulkerson, Hall, & Chino, 2013; Kreider et al., 2016), early education (Bainbridge, Meyers, Tanaka, & Waldfogel, 2005; Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm, & Waldfogel, 2004), and child care (Blau, 2003; Capizzano & Adams, 2000; Kaushal, Magnuson, & Waldfogel, 2011; Laughlin, 2010; Phillips, Voran, Kisker, Howes, & Whitebook, 1994). Lack of such resources at an early age helps establish the achievement
gap prior to kindergarten between children living in poverty and those children who do not (e.g., Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm, & Waldfogel, 2004).

The lack of resources continues throughout their academic trajectories. Children living in poverty often attend schools that lack adequate funding. The per pupil spending across the states for the 2014-2015 academic year ranged from $20,744 in New York to $6,751 in Utah (Cornman, Zhou, Howell, & Young, 2018). The disparate funding would not be an issue if lower amounts of per pupil spending were sufficient to provide the necessary resources in school districts across the United States. But, even within states, differences among high-poverty and low-poverty school districts remain significant after taking the regional cost of living and student needs into account (Baker, Farrie, & Sciarra, 2018; Turner et al., 2016). In other words, students living in poverty often attend school districts that are underfunded compared to schools located in wealthier communities.

School funding laws and policies in the United States contribute to disparities among schools. School districts often rely heavily on funding from local property taxes. Thus, students living in poverty often experience low funding per pupil, large class sizes, higher teacher turnover, fewer textbooks, and more unsafe conditions than do their counterparts in wealthier districts (Bartolomeo, 2004; Crawford, 2004). Children living in poverty, from minority status, and with special needs are more likely to experience this lack of resources (e.g., Cowan Pitre, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Duncan & Magnuson, 2005; Gándara, 2010).

The focus of the “opportunity gap” argument is that a lack of resources leads to educational inequities that begin in early childhood and persist throughout the students’ secondary and postsecondary education (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2013; Duncan &
Magnuson, 2005; Gorski, 2013; Verstegen, 2015). Darling-Hammond (2010) has identified three factors that may account for the opportunity gap: increased segregation of schools, lack of access to quality teachers, and lack of high-quality curriculum for all students. Some researchers reject poverty as the factor contributing to the achievement gap, because they see this approach as “blaming the victim” without acknowledging that systemic structural differences disproportionately deny minorities and students living in poverty the necessary resources to succeed academically (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

**Developmental setbacks.** A separate body of literature has focused on the developmental setbacks that are often associated with living in poverty and that, in turn, contribute to the achievement gap that follows the students from early childhood to postsecondary education and beyond. This body of research has documented extensively the association between poverty and children’s development, beginning in early childhood (see, e.g., Black, Hess, & Berenson-Howard, 2000; Campbell et al., 2001; Parker, Greer, & Zuckerman, 1988) and continuing throughout the rest of the students’ schooling (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2005). Different fields emphasize different pathways through which poverty may influence development. For example, some economists have emphasized that families who enjoy greater economic resources are able to provide better resources for their children, such as basic necessities, better learning environments, and higher-quality secondary schools (e.g., Becker, 1981). Other researchers, from the psychology and sociology fields, have emphasized the role of the family as a mediating force that can help or hinder child development (e.g., Chase-Lansdale & Pittman, 2002; McLoyd, 1990). In turn, differences in development impact academic achievement (Hair, Hanson, Wolfe, & Pollack,
2015). Which factors associated with poverty are related to impaired development remains a subject of debate (Golden, 2016; Oulhote & Grandjean, 2016).

**Resources and Development.** Nothing suggests that a lack of resources and developmental setbacks are mutually exclusive. It is possible that both systemic disadvantages deprive students of the resources necessary to excel academically and close the achievement gap, and that some of these deprivations are directly and/or indirectly influencing the students’ development. A lack of resources and impaired development can both influence the students’ academic achievement.

**Poverty-Achievement Nexus and Complex Trauma**

Another approach to understanding the poverty-achievement nexus is through the lens of complex trauma, which suggests that children in poverty are at a higher likelihood of impaired cognitive and socio-emotional development. Understanding poverty through the complex trauma lens is related to prior arguments that draw on impaired child development but differs insofar as this approach underscores poverty-related stress as a potential mechanism through which poverty influences development (see DeCarlo Santiago et al., 2011; Evans & Kim, 2013; Wadsworth et al., 2008). Socio-emotional wellbeing may be impaired in children who face high-poverty-related complex traumatic experiences. The *National Child Traumatic Stress Network* defines complex trauma as “both [[1]] children’s exposure to multiple traumatic events, often of an invasive interpersonal nature, and [[2]] the wide-ranging, long-term impacts of this exposure” (Complex Trauma, n.d.; see also Kliesthermes et al., 2014). Poverty seemingly meets this definition by more frequently exposing children to traumatic events, as discussed below, and their sequelae.
Exposure to Multiple Traumatic Events

Children living in chronic poverty are exposed to multiple traumatic events throughout their developmental years. The potentially traumatic events can occur both inside and outside the home. Inside the home, children living in poverty are more likely to experience increased economic strain (Wadsworth et al., 2008), infighting and violence, higher likelihood of dissolution of the family circle, parental preference for punitive disciplinary practices, neglect, increased maternal depression, and decreased parental supervision, attentiveness, and responsiveness (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Evans & English, 2002; Grant et al., 2003; Nikulina, Widom, & Czaja, 2011; Wadsworth & Compass, 2002). Poor households are also often structurally unsound, have increased noise level, are overcrowded and chaotic, and contain higher concentration of allergens (Evans & Kim, 2013).

Outside the home, children living in poverty face higher likelihood of exposure to neighborhood violence (e.g., Evans & English, 2002), discrimination, and other traumatic experiences (Simmons et al., 2002). For example, one study found a group of adolescent males living in impoverished urban areas had a 62.6% likelihood of experiencing assaultive violence and females had a 33.7% likelihood to experience such violence during their lifetimes (Breslau, Wilcox, Storr, Lucia, & Anthony, 2004; see also Knight, 2014). Any of these experiences can be traumatic, and multiple co-occurring traumatic experiences may exacerbate the trauma. When faced with these stressful situations, children will seek adult support to cope with the stress and reduce distress. Adult support

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3 e.g., Knight(2014) reported Black and Latino male adolescents cite community violence as the reason they are less likely to share their emotions, social perceptions and thoughts with their peers.
systems help protect the child and facilitate child coping skills, minimizing the risk of detrimental repercussions flowing from stressful and traumatic experiences (Cichetti & Valentino, 2006). Children living in poverty are more likely to lack the support system that offers protective factors and acts as buffer between the child and chronic stress. They are more prone to experience neglect, than any other form of maltreatment, leaving them without an adult support system (Hussey, Chang, Kotch, 2006). Without such protective factors, children's stress response systems remain activated for prolonged periods, destabilizing the healthy development of children and youth (Evans & Kim, 2010; Layne, Briggs, & Courtois, 2014; Sameroff, Seifer, & McDonough, 2004; Shonkoff et al., 2012).

**Impacts of Exposure to Trauma**

The effects of complex traumatic events on socio-emotional wellbeing may be described in two steps. First, exposure to trauma affects the child's socio-emotional development. Socio-emotional development begins in early childhood, developing the child's ability to regulate and express his or her emotions, form relationships with others, explore the environment and adapt to it, and live up to cultural expectations (Zenah, Stafford, Nagle, & Rice, 2005). Humans use emotions to evaluate their surroundings, assess changes in the environment and adapt to the changes (Pollack, 2008). Children who undergo healthy development can adapt rapidly. Children who experience complex trauma are less likely to regulate their behavior and adapt to new social contexts (Pollack, 2008). Children living in poverty are at a disadvantage because they often lack a support system, which deprives the child of opportunities to create emotional relationships with primary caregivers and acquire socio-emotional competence (Perry, 2002). Socio-emotional underdevelopment also leads to emotional dysregulation and difficulty forming
relationships (Adrian, Zeman, Erdley, Lisa, & Sim, 2011). Children living in low-income families are more likely to experience social maladaptation than their more affluent peers (Bolger, Patterson, Thompson, & Kuppersmidt, 1995).

Second, socio-emotional impairment in early development has long-term academic consequences (Ou & Reynolds, 2014). These consequences can be seen as late as postsecondary education. Students who have lower levels of socio-emotional competence often have lower grades (e.g., Parker et al., 2004a; Parker et al., 2005a), and are less likely to remain in college and graduate (Keefer et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2006).

However, even if students from impoverished backgrounds are at risk for developing lower levels of socio-emotional competence, it is important to note that children who suffer trauma and experience poverty-related stress may be competent in certain areas while lacking in others. For example, resilience in childhood and adolescence allows a person to adapt positively in the face of significant adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000).

**The Importance of Socio-Emotional Wellbeing on Academic Achievement**

As indicated above, a growing body of research underscores that students with lower levels of socio-emotional skills have greater difficulties in schools and are less likely to achieve at higher levels. Research has slowly begun to delve further to understand how students with higher socio-emotional competence perform better than students who have lower socio-emotional skills (see, e.g., Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). Per Heckman, “[A]n emerging literature shows that, as is intuitively obvious and commonsensical, much more than smarts is required for success in life. Motivation, sociability (the ability to work with
others), the ability to focus on tasks, self-regulation, self-esteem, time preference, health and mental health all matter” (Heckman, 2008, p. 10).

Socio-emotional wellbeing and competence is important for postsecondary education success (Caldwell & Siwatu, 2003), sometimes recognized as having a greater positive impact on academic achievement than cognitive abilities (Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001; Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua, 2006). Postsecondary students with better socio-emotional wellbeing than their peers perform better in different areas: grades (Parker et al., 2004a; Parker et al., 2004b; Parker et al., 2005a; Parker, Duffy, Wood, Bond, Hogan, 2005b), retention (Parker et al., 2006), and college completion (Keefer et al., 2012). This may be in part because college students who are more socially and emotionally competent perceive less stress, experience less physical fatigue, are less anxious in social settings, and are overall more satisfied with life (Brown & Schutte, 2006; Extremera & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2006; Pau & Croucher, 2003; Palmer, Donaldson, & Stough, 2002; Summerfeldt, Kloosterman, Antony, & Parker, 2006; Thompson, Waltz, Croyle, & Pepper, 2007).

**Closing the Achievement Gap Through Standards-Based Reform Policy**

While the importance of socio-emotional learning to academic and life outcomes has become increasingly clear to researchers, public policy has lagged behind. Since the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk* alarmed the nation about the state of education in the United States, public policy has focused on standards-based reform. Under standards-based reforms, the public policy in the United States has focused on test scores or ‘smarts’ and has often used these test scores to measure school success or failure (Heckman, 2008; Orfield & Kornhaber, 2001; Ravitch, 2016). Such policies place little emphasis on helping students develop their socio-emotional competence.
Most prominent among these standards-based reform policies was the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. President George W. Bush reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as NCLB in 2002. Under NCLB, states were required to carry out annual testing of public school students in grades three through eight and at least once in high school in English Language Arts and math. In addition, the schools and districts had to report the standardized test results both for their student body in the aggregate and for subgroups of students, including English language learners, racial minorities, students in special education, and students from low-income families. Failure to produce gains in scores for all groups could lead to school closures. While the states claimed to be improving student achievement, studies show that NCLB did not narrow the poverty-achievement gap (e.g., Lee, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2016).

Subsequent efforts have likewise largely emphasized standards-based reforms. During the Obama administration, the Department of Education promoted Common Core standards and its aligned tests through its Race to the Top program and waivers from No Child Left Behind (Kornhaber, Barkauskas, & Griffith, 2016). President Barack Obama also signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act, which is less punitive than NCLB, but still holds schools accountable for improving their students’ standardized test scores. In sum, federal policies have largely neglected the importance of fostering the students’ socio-emotional learning.

**Efforts to Promote Socio-Emotional Learning**

More recently, there has been an increased emphasis on socio-emotional learning opportunities. Programs and policies to promote socio-emotional learning are substantially different, partly because definitions of the social and emotional skills vary.
Although a uniform definition is lacking (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015), efforts to promote socio-emotional learning all acknowledge the importance of promoting skills that go beyond traditional tested content knowledge. Chief among these efforts are the 21st century skills movement, trauma-sensitive or trauma-informed education in Massachusetts and Washington, respectively, and individual school and district efforts to promote the five socio-emotional competencies as defined by CASEL.

**21st Century Skills**

Proponents of 21st century skills—Bernie Trilling, Charles Fadel, and Marc Prensky—along with teachers, education experts, and business leaders around the globe have formed an organization called Partnership 21, or P21, and identified four elements necessary for students to succeed in the 21st century. Students should have knowledge of key subjects (e.g., reading and math) along with global awareness; financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; health literacy; and environmental literacy.

The remaining three elements overlap with the five socio-emotional skills discussed in this dissertation, though the focus of the 21st century skills remains on preparing students for an increasingly digitally interconnected workforce: (1) students should be able to use their creativity and innovate, think critically and problem-solve, communicate effectively, and collaborate with others; (2) given that students live in a digital age, they should be able to think critically, collaborate, and make individual contributions using technology; and (3) students should develop life skills, defined as having flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility.
P21 is not a governmental agency and does not have the same policy instruments that state agencies can use, such as mandates. Instead, P21 helps interested school districts develop standards and implementation strategies and also offers a grant as an inducement for schools, districts, and, as of 2017, entities such as camps that promote the 21st century skills. In partnership with P21, 21 states have adopted education policies that promote the 21st century skills (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2018).

**Trauma Sensitive/Trauma Informed Education**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the state of Washington have adopted state-wide policies that promote trauma-sensitive or trauma-informed education. These efforts are aimed at helping educators remain sensitive to students’ needs resulting from exposure, or potential exposure, to trauma. The compilation of these efforts is a result of years of advocacy in each state.

After 15 years of advocacy by legal advocates, on August 23, 2014, Governor Deval Patrick of Massachusetts adopted the *Safe and Supportive Schools* policy as part of the omnibus *An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence* (Mass. Ann. Law. Ch. 69, § 1P). Though the advocacy focused on promoting trauma-sensitive education, the advocates changed the language used to “safe and supportive schools” to avoid political backlash.

The Massachusetts policy outlines the criteria that define safe and supportive schools. It states that a safe and supportive school takes a holistic approach to education, providing academic, social, and emotional services to the students and making efforts to streamline extant policy initiatives that help students with academic, social, and emotional

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4 The states are Arizona, California, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.
areas. The policy also mandates the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) develop a framework that promotes safe and supportive schools, create a self-assessment tool through which schools can assess their weaknesses and strengths to create and sustain safe and supportive schools, and establish a state-wide 18-member commission dedicated to furthering and studying safe and supportive schools in the Commonwealth. Finally, the policy employs grant-funding as an inducement for participating schools to adopt the framework and receive training from the DESE.

Washington State has taken a similar approach, promoting trauma-informed education. The State’s Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction along with Woodring College of Education at Western Washington University in Bellingham co-authored *The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success* (Wolpow, Johnson, Hertel, & Kincaid, 2009). As in Massachusetts, Washington State’s initiative is not a mandate for schools but provides training, guidance, referrals, and technical assistance to schools who want to adopt the compassionate framework. This framework is individualistic and includes ten principles: focus on school and community climate, train and support school personnel to become informed about the relation between trauma and learning, encourage and maintain open communication at all times, develop strengths-based approach in working with students, use disciplinary measures that are restorative not punitive, provide tiered support for all students based on their individual needs, create accommodations for diverse learners, provide access, voice, and ownership for staff, students, and community members, and use data to identify vulnerable students and determine outcomes and strategies for continuous quality improvement. (Wolpow, Johnson, Hertel, & Kincaid, 2009).
Schools and Districts’ Promotion of Socio-Emotional Learning as Defined by CASEL

CASEL has identified five socio-emotional skills that they argue are necessary for academic and personal well-being. This dissertation draws on CASEL’s five socio-emotional skills in analyzing socio-emotional learning opportunities within the UB summer program. Districts and schools have adopted the five-competency framework to begin efforts to promote socio-emotional learning in the classroom, schools, and districts. For example, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools hired a director of socio-emotional learning to direct efforts to foster socio-emotional skills, and Sacramento City Unified School District is helping students identify bullying and make responsible decisions in their daily lives.

These efforts by P21, Washington State and Massachusetts, and CASEL-influenced districts and schools draw on different theoretical foundations and a body of literature that supports the importance of socio-emotional skills to academic and personal well-being and the strategies that are most successful in helping students learn socio-emotional skills. For example, Washington State’s manual references ecological theory to explain the importance of helping students enhance their socio-emotional skills (Wolpow et al., 2009). Specifically, Washington’s manual references the work of Mary Harvey, who argued that trauma is best understood by considering the interrelationships between individuals and the contexts within which they exist (Harvey, 1996). In this sense, Harvey’s conceptualization of trauma applies Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory to trauma and development (see Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The proponents of 21st century skills operate under two basic premises: (1) the digital age increasingly requires workers to use technology in their jobs and interact with the global community (2) education systems need to prepare students to survive in the new economic realities of the 21st century
(Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Each represents serious efforts to develop the students’ socio-emotional skills in school and, to a lesser extent, outside of school.

However, the majority of young people’s time is not spent in school, making what happens beyond the school walls of considerable importance. The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that on average students in the United States spend 6.64 hours per day in school and attend school 180 days per year, that is 1,195 hours total per year (SASS, 2007-2008). This means that in eighteen years of schooling, high school graduates will have spent approximately 14% of their time in school. Some organizations, such as P21 and CASEL, have expanded their efforts to other non-schooling entities and the home. Policy makers within and beyond the field of education would benefit from learning more about the efforts to promote socio-emotional learning outside of schools.

**Compensatory Education to Help Students Outside of School**

To assist students outside the school setting, federal policies have authorized compensatory education to prepare students living in poverty to succeed in secondary school and beyond. One such program is Upward Bound (UB), a national program that aims to help high school students succeed in high school and postsecondary education. The U.S. Department of Education provides grants nation-wide to colleges, organizations, or agencies that house UB Programs. UB Programs provide additional assistance to high-poverty students to facilitate postsecondary success. In other words, UB attempts to help remedy the educational lag that many students living in poverty experience throughout their academic trajectory in the traditional, K-12 education system. The UB Programs are under the TRIO Programs umbrella, which were established in 1965 during President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty. Three UB Programs exist: Regular UB, Veterans UB, and
UB Math and Science. In the 2016-17 academic year, the Department of Education funded 810 UB Programs.

The purpose of UB Programs is to “generate skills and motivation necessary for success in education beyond secondary school” (20 U.S.C.S. § 1070a-13 (a)). Any UB Program must provide academic tutoring (e.g., reading, studying skills, and math), advise participants on secondary and postsecondary course selection, help prepare participants for college entrance exams and college admissions applications, provide financial aid information and assistance completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), guide and assist students on secondary school reentry, alternative education programs that lead to secondary school diplomas for students who dropout, obtaining a general and educational development (GED) program degree, or postsecondary education, and provide education or counseling services to improve financial aid literacy of both students and their parents (20 U.S.C.S. § 1070a-13 (b)). Grantees who operate for two or more years must also include math instruction “through pre-calculus, laboratory science, foreign language, composition, and literature” in their core curriculum in the succeeding years. Additionally, UB offers a residential Summer Academy for program participants.

Program eligibility is limited to individuals who meet immigration status criteria (U.S. citizens, permanent residents, or those who can produce evidence form the Immigration and Naturalization Service of intent to become permanent residents), are (1) potential first-generation college students; (2) low-income individuals; or (3) have a high risk for academic failure and have completed eighth grade and are at least 13 years of age but less than 19. The program requires that two-thirds of participants in any UB project be both potential first-generation college students and low-income. The remaining one third
can be low-income, first-generation, or at high risk of academic failure (Upward Bound, 2018).

**Promoting Socio-Emotional Learning Through Compensatory Education**

Given the growing consensus about the importance of socio-emotional skills to academic success, and the proportion of time young people spend beyond school walls, it is important to understand how programs outside of schools, such as UB, are promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities. Studies of UB have been largely focused on cognitive and measurable gains (e.g., postsecondary enrollment and attainment-Balz & Esten, 1998, McElroy, Armesto, & American Federation of Teachers, 1998; enrollment rates-Cowan, 2002; grades-Strayhorn, 2010; number and type of courses taken-McLure, ACT, & Child, 1998). That focus has led to three interrelated issues. First, the use of different methodologies and measurements in the quantitative studies have led to mixed results of the UB’s effectiveness (e.g., Cowan Pitre & Pitre, 2009; Garms, 1971; Myers, Olsen, Sefor, Young, & Tuttle, 2004; Sefor, Mamun, & Schirm, 2009), sometimes serving as justification for policy makers who want to defund the program (See Decker, 2014). Second, as is often the case in K-12 schools under high-stakes testing regimes, UB Programs may attend less to improving non-cognitive components because the programs’ worth is evaluated in terms of more readily measurable gains.

Third, the lack of attention to socio-emotional well-being and other potential benefits of UB limits knowledge about how socio-emotional components operate in compensatory education and/or how they can be improved in subsequent implementations. While some researchers have argued for more research on the “soft skills” potentially learned in UB (Caldwell & Siwatu, 2003), most of the focus remains on
cognitive gains and standardized, measurable outcomes, such as grades (e.g., Strayhorn, 2010) and enrollment rates (e.g., Cowan, 2002). The few studies that have looked into socio-emotional competence components of UB have tended to focus on a few socio-emotional skills at a time, such as self-concept and attitude (Paschal & Williams, 1970), self-efficacy (O’Brien et al., 2000), self-regulation, increased motivation, self-esteem, and educational goals (Bakal, Madaus, & Winder, 1968).

In this study, I examined how a UB Program promotes the learning of all five socio-emotional skills (CASEL, 2017) during its six-week summer program. Specifically, I examined how the program staff fostered socio-emotional learning opportunities for the program participants.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This chapter presents the methods used to examine efforts to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities in an Upward Bound (UB) summer program. I begin with a description of the research design along with the rationale for using a case study to answer my research questions. Then, I describe the research setting and context for the study, including the policies governing the program and the summer program itself. Subsequently, I describe the research sample and participants, data collection methods, and data analysis. I conclude this chapter with the study's limitations.

**Research Design and Methodology**

This research into efforts to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities in a UB summer program entails a single case study. As Yin (2009) has said, “The essence of a case study . . . is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result” (Schramm et al., 1971, p. 6, emphasis added) (p. 17). This study presents a single case study of how the UB summer program staff conceptualizes socio-emotional skills and how they promote socio-emotional learning opportunities during the summer program. In likening a case study to single experiment, Yin (2009) explains that case studies are important in generating new knowledge and building theory. This case study adds knowledge to the extant body of literature on how compensatory education programs can support student achievement by enhancing the students’ socio-emotional skills.

The research design for a case study should include a five-components, according to Yin (2009): (1) research questions, (2) study's propositions, (3) study's unit(s) of analysis,
(4) the logic linking the data to the propositions, and (5) the criteria to interpret the results. Below, I describe the components for the case study at hand.

**Research Questions**

This case study addresses two research questions. Both questions are *how* questions, further supporting the use of the case study method to answer these questions (Yin, 2009). (1) *How does the UB summer program staff conceptualize socio-emotional skills?* And (2) *How does the UB summer program staff promote socio-emotional learning?* I map the staff’s understanding of socio-emotional skills to the CASEL competencies to investigate whether the staff emphasizes all or some of these skills and to understand how the conceptualization of socio-emotional skills may vary across the three staff groups—administrators, instructors, and residential mentors.

The second question focuses on the staff’s efforts to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities. These efforts are wide-ranging, and may include such things as adopting policies that promote socio-emotional learning, planning the summer program schedule, using activities to promote socio-emotional learning explicitly, and incorporating socio-emotional learning opportunities when responding to unplanned student events.

**Study’s Proposition**

The second component, the proposition(s), refers to the areas that the researcher should analyze within the scope of the research (Yin, 2009). The proposition for this study is that research into how the summer staff conceptualizes socio-emotional skills and promotes socio-emotional learning can inform scholarly and practical understanding about promoting socio-emotional competencies in out-of-school settings. In addition, the
education field can better learn about the areas of strength and areas for growth in promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities.

**Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis in this case study is the single UB summer program. This summer program is delimited by geographic and temporal bounds. The summer program is located in the northeast region of the United States and took place in summer 2017.

**Logic Linking Data to Propositions**

To link my data to the study’s proposition, I conducted an inductive analysis of the data I collected through interviews and observations and a deductive analysis of the data which was guided by Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theoretical framework. In the course of these inductive and deductive analyses, I noted socio-emotional competencies that were articulated and promoted by the UB summer program staff and areas that challenged staff understanding and promotion of these competencies.

**Criteria to Interpret Results**

To interpret my results, I returned to the theoretical foundation for this case study and identified the gaps in the staff’s efforts in promoting socio-emotional learning in each system, as described in the bioecological theory. I also drew on the Cohen’s and Moffitt’s (2009) concept of capability to interpret the gaps and further explain how the program can address these gaps and strengthen their efforts to promote socio-emotional learning.

**The Case Study: Research Context and Setting**

This case study examined the 2017 summer academy of a UB Program located in the northeast region of the United States. The program included a Regular UB Program, which serves disadvantaged students living in poverty and who are potential first-generation
college students. The summer program also includes a Math and Science UB Program, which serves a similar student population, except that the students in UB Math and Science have an interest in pursuing careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. For practical purposes, the difference between both programs during the summer is superficial. During the summer, the program provides all students the same opportunities, including the opportunity to take elective STEM-focused courses. The study presents an in-depth analysis of how the UB Program staff, who serve both programs, conceptualize socio-emotional skills and how they implement socio-emotional learning opportunities.

To provide context for this case, below I explain the various policies that govern the program in general and the summer program in particular. I also provide an overview of the summer program that is the subject to this study.

Program Policies Governing Upward Bound

Federal policy. At the federal level, the language of the authorizing statute is fairly broad, simply stating that UB is “designed to generate skills and motivation necessary for success in education beyond secondary school” (20 U.S.C. 1070a-13). The regulations add some clarifying language in describing the aims of the policy, stating that the goal of the program is “to generate in program participants the skills and motivation necessary to complete a program of secondary education and to enter and succeed in a program of postsecondary education” (Upward Bound, 2018). This language indicates that the program policy has two aims: successful completion of secondary and postsecondary education.
To meet the aims of the policy, the regulations provide a list of required and permissible services and also describe what components each program must include. Table 3.1 below describes a breakdown of required services and permissible services that the programs must and can do.

**Table 3.1: Activities Required and Permissible Under the UB Program Policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Program Services</th>
<th>Permissible Program Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Academic tutoring</td>
<td>➢ Exposure to cultural events, academic programs, and other activities unavailable to disadvantaged youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Advice on postsecondary course-selection</td>
<td>➢ Information, activities, and instruction to acquaint students with career options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Help with college entrance exams</td>
<td>➢ On-campus residential programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Help with college admissions</td>
<td>➢ Mentoring programs involving elementary/secondary teachers or counselors, faculty members, or students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Information on financial aid</td>
<td>➢ Work-study positions where youth have exposure to careers that require postsecondary degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Help completing FAFSA</td>
<td>➢ Programs and activities specially designed for English as a Second Language (ESL) participants or other groups underrepresented in postsecondary education, such as students with disabilities, homeless, aging out of foster care, or other disconnected youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ For students who drop out, help with</td>
<td>➢ Any activities designed to meet the purposes of the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o secondary school reentry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o alternative education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o entry into general educational development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o entry into postsecondary education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Education or counseling to improve financial and economic literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ After program receives at least two years of funding, instruction in math through calculus, lab sciences, foreign language, composition, and literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Upward Bound, 2018.*

As Table 3.1 illustrates, the policy’s priorities aim to help students acquire the necessary skills for secondary and postsecondary success and are primarily academic in nature. The policy acknowledges the importance of other skills, such as acquaintance with
cultural events. However, these are only permissible services, not the main focus of the policy.

Similarly, the policy lists required and permissible components that must and can be present when the UB staff decides how to organize a UB Program. Table 3.2 below lists the required and permissible components.

**Table 3.2: Required Organization of UB Programs (Regular and Math and Science)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required</th>
<th>Permissible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Summer instructional component simulating college-going experience</td>
<td>➢ Summer bridge for graduating seniors transitioning into college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ An academic year component</td>
<td>➢ Math and Science:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Summer component shall</td>
<td>○ Summer bridge consisting of math/science coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Be six weeks, unless the program can show less time will not hinder purpose</td>
<td>○ Academic year component designed to enhance achievement of project objectives in the most cost-effective way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Provide services at least five days per week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Provide participants with one or more required services weekly throughout the academic year, unless the participant is not readily accessible at which point the program may provide the services every two weeks during the academic year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ UB Math and Science:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Intensive instruction in math and science, including hands-on experience in labs, in computer labs, and at field-sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Opportunities to learn from mathematicians, scientists, and other researchers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Activities with undergraduates who major in math and science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Summer program (at least six weeks) simulating college-going experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Upward Bound, 2018.*
The program that is the subject of this case study reflects and operates within these federal policy bounds. The adherence to these required and permissible services partially explains why the summer program in this case study emphasizes some services, while it provides others only if and when time permits.

The federal policy is noteworthy not only for what it includes in its required and permissible services and organization, but also for what it leaves out. Notably absent from the policy is the definition of the phrase “skills and motivation necessary for success.” The phrase arguably supports an interpretation that the policy includes socio-emotional skills, given the importance of socio-emotional skills for academic success in secondary and post-secondary schooling (Belfield et al, 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Hawkins et al., 2008). To illustrate, the list of permissible activities opens up the possibilities for promoting socio-emotional learning in the program directly. Under this list, the program may opt to promote social awareness through cultural events and relationships skills through mentoring programs, to provide two concrete examples.

The interpretation that the policy includes socio-emotional skills among those necessary for success in secondary and post-secondary education can go even further. For example, the requirement to assist the students with financial aid and economic literacy includes fostering the students’ ability to make responsible decisions about monetary matters. UB Programs can also teach self-management and responsible decision-making while tutoring the students on academic courses. In sum, in providing the required services, the program staff can promote learning of any or all of the socio-emotional skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.
The administrators of the UB Program in this case study have adopted this interpretation of the policy, thereby taking the opportunity to promote socio-emotional skills through the required and permissible services. To illustrate, Truman, the assistant director of the UB Program in this case study, explained that one of the goals of the UB Program is to promote 21st century skills, which include team collaboration, cross cultural competence, and self-direction, akin to CASEL’s five socio-emotional skills. When asked whether he feels that the regulation or policies at the federal level might hinder the development of 21st century skills, Truman explained that he didn’t think so and pointed to the discretion granted in the regulations to support his argument:

No, I don’t see any laws hindering. No, I don’t and I’ll tell you why I don’t. [E]ven though [the Department of Education] grants authority, [it] doesn’t mean that we can’t do [an activity], unless they actually write down something in the regs that say you cannot do any activity that follows the 21st century competencies. I just don’t see it happening. (Truman, personal communication, June 16, 2017)

Like many other participants, Truman worked within the discretion of the program to promote socio-emotional skills otherwise not required in the regulations. Though the skills were not mandated, Truman nonetheless saw these skills as essential to help students succeed in secondary and postsecondary education. Other UB staff who were familiar with the policies took a similar approach: policies and goals that are not prohibited are therefore permissible within the staff’s discretion, including promoting socio-emotional skills. For example, the policy includes language about promoting self-motivation and thus leaves room to promote self-management through the required services. As illustrated in this study, interpreting the policy language to include fostering socio-emotional learning opportunities is possible, even though the federal policy language remains vague.
Institutional policies and program policies. Institutional and program policies also govern the program. The institutional policies focus on student safety. For example, the university housing the UB Program has policies in place to ensure the safety of the students on campus at all times, including a policy that requires that two adults must be present in any communication between an adult and any minor housed on campus. In addition, summer staff must undergo training on mandated reporting on child abuse.

Finally, the local UB Program, the subject of this case study, had an unwritten policy to promote socio-emotional learning, a policy enabled in part by the vague language of the federal policy. This policy is evident in the administrators’ efforts to provide training on socio-emotional learning. However, in the findings (Chapter Four) this informal, unstated program policy is not entirely clear to the summer staff.

Upward Bound Summer Academy’s Schedule and Content

During the summer, the program selected a group of approximately 115 students to attend a six-week residential summer academy. The summer session included academic classes, college preparation classes, and other extra-curricular activities. The summer program lasted six continuous weeks beginning in mid-June. During this period, the students attended classes from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Mondays through Fridays.

The courses included deliberations (an English course that culminated in a group debate in each class), capstone (a research class where each student worked on a research project), college preparation (a 50-minute class designed to help upcoming sophomores, juniors, and seniors prepare for college applications and develop college skills, such as time-management), science (including geo-science and chemistry), and math (including calculus and algebra).
After the “school” day, the students went to dinner for an hour and then had siesta time from 6:00 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. Then, they spent the rest of the time playing sports, working on homework, and socializing with one another or the residential staff on- or off-campus.

The students went home late each Friday afternoon and returned to campus on Sunday to prepare for Monday. They also had an extended break for the Fourth of July holiday. Generally, the parents did not pick up or drop off the students; the students took a school bus from their towns to the UB summer program and back. During the final days of the program, the students took a two-day trip to New York City. They returned to campus only to pack their belongings and leave home.

Participants and Sampling

I approached the program director in the fall of 2016 with the idea to study the program’s implementation of socio-emotional learning during the summer. She agreed to the project, and I moved forward in conceptualizing the study and submitted the research proposal for Institutional Review Board (IRB) review on May 11, 2017. IRB granted the approval on May 29, 2017.

Informed Consent and Participants’ Rights

When I submitted all documentation for IRB review, I included the participant consent forms. IRB classified the study exempt and therefore the participants did not have to complete and return consent forms. Rather, their participation constituted consent. At the time of recruitment and at the beginning of the interviews, I explained the details of the study to the participants, the complete voluntary nature of the study, and their right to cease participation at any point during the study.
Recruitment

I coordinated with the program director about where I could potentially recruit participants. She suggested I could attend both of the two remaining training sessions to recruit potential participants. These trainings were not mandatory; but she expected nearly half of the instructors to attend. To recruit residential mentors, the director explained that I could also attend their week-long training session and recruit participants. Finally, she shared that to recruit program administrators, I could ask each of them individually.

I attended the pedagogy training session for the instructors and the smaller information session that followed. These were intended to help instructors teaching deliberations (English) classes locate lesson plans and other course material on a shared online portal. I introduced myself and the research study. I said I would be grateful if they would be willing to participate in two interviews, one at the beginning of the UB Program and one at its conclusion. I also emphasized that participation in the study was completely voluntary and choosing not to participate in the interviews would not have any negative impact on their standing with the summer program or otherwise. All instructors present signed up as interested participants. I used the same approach at the training for the residential mentors. All residential mentors signed up as well. The residential coordinator explained that given the fast-paced, intensive nature of the program and his responsibilities during the summer, he would participate to the extent he was able to do so.

After compiling a master list of all the interested participants, I contacted all the names on the list and scheduled times to conduct the first interviews. Twenty-nine participants on the list of 35 interested parties signed up and completed an initial interview.
To recruit participants for the post-program interviews, I waited for the classes and summer program to be over before contacting the 29 potential participants via email. From the 29 participants from the first interviews, 23 participated in the second and final interviews. Additionally, the residential coordinator was unable to participate in either interview but explained that any observations about him and his management of the residential staff members could be used.

**Sampling**

I used purposeful criterion sampling. The inclusion criterion was staff who worked in the UB summer program in summer 2017. I noted race, ethnicity, and gender as I analyzed the data, though these were not criteria for inclusion. Participants worked in the UB summer program in different capacities. Some administered the program, creating schedules and providing resources, for example, while others worked in close proximity with the students. The sample can be divided into three different sets: (1) administrators who hired summer staff, planned the summer schedule, had the final decision on responses to unplanned events, and provided resources for the summer staff who worked directly with the students; (2) instructors who taught a variety of courses (deliberations, math, science, and the capstone research class); and (3) residential mentors who supervised the students outside of the instructional classroom time and planned extra-curricular activities with and for the students.

**Research Sample**

The sample includes 23 UB summer program staff who completed both interviews. In this sample are (1) five permanent staff that lead the program: three counselors, the director and assistant director, (2) 10 instructors, and (3) eight residential mentors. The
sample includes 14 females and nine males, though gender was not a criterion for inclusion. All of the participants played a role in the planning or execution of the summer program, albeit in different ways. With the exception of the administrators, the other summer staff members did not work with the UB Program during the academic year, only during the summer.

**Table 3.3: Study Participants by Pseudonym, Job Title, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosie</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truman</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holden</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecile</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talin</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnold</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bette</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dortha</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edna</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddox</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rae</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilton</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard</td>
<td>Residential Mentor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby</td>
<td>Residential Mentor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollie</td>
<td>Residential Mentor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Residential Mentor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Residential Mentor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis</td>
<td>Residential Mentor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilber</td>
<td>Residential Mentor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilda</td>
<td>Residential Mentor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Administrators.** The administrators were responsible for the programming and the execution of the summer program plan. They worked for UB year-round in their official capacities: director, assistant director, and counselors. Two counselors were stationed in the same office as the director and assistant director, while the third counselor was
stationed at one of the schools UB services. The administrators had varying levels of experience working with college access programs or student populations similar to the student population UB services. Some administrators had more than 10 years of experience working with high school students who have challenging backgrounds, such as migrant students, while other administrators had worked with the UB population for only two years.

Once the summer program began, the director and assistant director had less contact with the students than the other staff members. Their duties entailed providing resources when necessary, ensuring the programming occurred as planned, to the greatest extent possible, and making final decisions about the handling of student or staff disciplinary issues. The counselors had more direct contact with the students. Three counselors were teaching a seminar at the beginning of the summer and one of the three also oversaw a summer fitness-promotion program. The counselors played a unique role that extended across the three staff groups but are included with the administrators because their primary role throughout the year, including the summer, is helping administer the program. To illustrate how their roles spanned across the three groups, consider the following examples. In their administrators’ role, one counselor had the opportunity to sit in for the hiring of other summer staff members, and two others worked together to create a room-assignment student roster for a trip out of town. In their roles as instructors, at the beginning of the summer program, all three taught a college preparation course. Finally, they all spent time at the residential halls during the evening activities, similar to the residential mentors.
The administrators did not train during the summer for their summer role. But they did have to complete an online module on mandated child-abuse reporting before the summer. They also attended different training sessions throughout the year, which could have informed their approaches to working with the summer students. Out of the five administrators, one reported that she had never received training on socio-emotional learning in UB, while another described some socio-emotional learning components of various trainings she had attended throughout the year, such as learning more about being sensitive to potential trauma that students have experienced. The other administrators attended different regional UB trainings to keep them abreast program changes and to learn about other programs’ practices and share and borrow summer program ideas.

**Instructors.** The instructors in this case study taught the following content areas: deliberations, capstone, geo-science, chemistry, math, college preparation, and ESL support. During the summer, most had only attenuated interactions with other staff. Some instructors taught their courses and then left the UB premises. Others were interested in learning more about the hardships the students faced and the students’ lives more broadly and were intentional about reaching out to the counselors to better understand each of their students individually.

Generally, the instructors did not work with the UB Program except for the summer when they taught their courses. They did have prior related work experience. Most of the instructors had taught college or K-12 classes, and four out of the 10 instructors who participated in the study had prior experience teaching in the summer with UB prior to summer 2017.
The instructors had an opportunity to attend two type of training sessions prior to the summer program: two sessions on pedagogy and two sessions on ethical literacy, which focused on ideas about promoting ethical decision-making in the classroom. The trainings were not mandatory but highly encouraged. The instructors also had to complete an online training module on mandated reporting before the summer program began.

**Residential Mentors.** The residential mentors took care of the students from the moment the students finished their school day at 5:00 p.m. until the students went to bed at 10:30 p.m. During this time, the residential mentors sought to ensure the students’ safety; they also participated in various student activities. For example, the residential mentors joined the get-moving sporting activities alongside the students. They also supervised the students when the students had permission to leave the residential commons. In addition, the residential mentors scheduled residential mentor seminars, 50-minute classes where the residential mentors had the autonomy to decide how to structure their time and choose to teach what they saw fit.

As for related work experience, 3 out of the 8 residential mentors participating in this study were UB alumni. Some had graduated the program in 2015. Other than their own UB experience, the residential mentors had no experience working with UB students or similar populations.

During the week prior to the summer program, the residential mentors participated in five days of training from morning to evening. During these trainings, they learned about the program safety policies, such as mandated reporting and identifying suicidal tendencies, and about how to work with students in summer camps. The administrators led the training for the first half of the day, and the residential coordinator led the second
portion of the day. At the beginning of each morning, afternoon, and evening training session, the staff began with an icebreaker to build a sense of community among the residential mentors. The residential coordinator also incorporated team-building exercises into his trainings. Additionally, the residential coordinator emphasized the importance of transforming student disciplinary issues into “teachable moments” when working with the young high school students.

**Data Collection Procedures**

**Interviews**

I interviewed participants twice, once either just before or soon after the actual program started and again after the end of the program. The in-depth interviews lasted on average one hour, the shortest being approximately thirty minutes and the longest being approximately two hours. I structured the interviews such that I covered general questions about the program that allowed the participants to feel comfortable enough to share potentially more difficult material toward the end of the interview. I also reminded the participants that they could take a break at any point during the interview or skip a question if the information was too sensitive. At any point in the interview, if I perceived discomfort, I reminded the participants about their right to take a break or discontinue the interview at any point during the interview.

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5 This means that some of the interviews were not pre-program interviews *per se* but were early enough that the staff did not yet have the full experience of the summer and were still planning for the rest of the summer program. In the first set of interviews, the residential mentors’ actual, extensive interactions with the students informed their answers to a greater extent than with the instructors who, though may have seen the students for a week, may have seen them only once for at most three hours. In contrast, the residential mentors spent time with the students daily from 5:00 p.m. until the students retreated to their bedrooms at 10:30 p.m.
The first set of interviews covered three areas. First, I asked the participants about their general understanding of the program and the program’s goals to promote socio-emotional learning. Second, I asked the participants about their interactions with the students. Third, I asked the participants about their interactions with other staff members and about their personal well-being.

The post-program interviews mirrored the same questions as the first set of interviews earlier in the program but were meant to be reflective versus prospective. That is, they were not based on plans but actual interactions that had taken place with the students. During the post-program interviews, I asked the participants to provide specific examples when possible when answering the questions.

All interviews were conducted in a reserved space where the participants were able to answer the questions without concern that anyone else would overhear the conversation. I recorded all interviews using an application on my phone. After each interview, I transferred the audio to a file on my personal computer, which is secured by a password, and deleted the audio file from the phone application. I used Rev.com to transcribe all interviews and saved all transcripts in a password-protected online data storage service provided by Penn State University.

**Observations and Fieldnotes**

Throughout the staff trainings and the summer program, I recorded fieldnotes to capture my observations of the participants performing their job duties. To guide my observations, I used an observation protocol that mirrored the contents of the interview protocols. I attended different meetings, classrooms, extra-curricular activities, award ceremonies, and any activities where the staff could potentially interact with each other or
the students and recorded the staff's words and physical gestures in fieldnotes. Table 3.4 below contains a list of the type of activities I observed and an approximation of how long each of the observations lasted.

**Table 3.4: Field Observations and Time Spent at Each Observation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Time Spent Observing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deliberations information session</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy training</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential mentors training sessions</td>
<td>3 sessions, 2 hours each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information session for students</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators staff meeting</td>
<td>1 hour, 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening time at residential common halls with no student issues</td>
<td>2 days, 2 hours each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership seminar</td>
<td>50 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty-student mixer</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberations presentations</td>
<td>2 sessions, 2 hours each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study hall sessions</td>
<td>3 days, 50 min each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening time at residential common halls when staff responded to a student-student discord</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest speaker talk, state's sec. of education</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class visits</td>
<td>14 classes, from 40 min to 3 hours each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential mentors seminar</td>
<td>50 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unplanned event: exercise with the entire student body to underscore the importance of inclusion in response to cultural and racial tension among the students</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unplanned event (responding to student disciplinary issue)</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-on-one discussion with instructor who shared her frustration on how to handle difficult student issues, such as lack of self-motivation and racial tension</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students awards ceremony</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students talent show</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As I made these observations, I wrote reflective memos that captured my thoughts on the observations and any potential patterns I started to see after several observations. I often revisited these memos before other observations and after the program concluded.

Data Analysis

Pre-Coding Inductive Analysis

I began my data analysis inductively, reading the transcripts for each participant and making the equivalent of marginal notes using NVivo. In making marginal notes, I summarized participants’ responses, flagged participants’ word-choice, and identified recommendations. I also noted sentences or phrases that signaled potential strengths or areas of growth for the summer program regarding the implementation of socio-emotional learning opportunities. While making marginal notes, I also wrote memos to track my descriptions of potential initial codes and analyses of the data as these codes developed. Using the NVivo feature that compiles all memos and notes in their respective separate sections, I reviewed the memos and notes to again gain a better understanding of the summer program based on the participants’ interviews.

After reviewing the marginal notes and memos, I returned to the interview transcripts and re-read the set of pre- and post-program interviews for each participant, in that order, and gathered perceptions and experiences that were relevant to each individual participant. After reading each set of interviews for every participant, I wrote a summary for each participant. The summary memos reflect a holistic view of each participant, capturing the participants’ backgrounds, trainings in the program and outside the program, interactions with the other staff members, their interactions with the students, and challenges throughout the summer.
I then reviewed the summaries to gain a greater understanding of each participant, how each participant fit within the summer staff as a whole, and to glean commonalities and divergences within the administrators, instructors, and residential mentor groups and across all participants. As I read through the summaries, I noted my understanding of the common trends, divergences, and peculiarities through memos. The commonalities and divergences informed the potential initial codes I had identified when making marginal notes. In addition, I also wrote memos that summarized my thoughts on how the staff conceptualized socio-emotional skills and how the program implemented socio-emotional learning opportunities throughout the summer program.

**Deductive Analysis**

When the participant summaries were largely written, I began to formally code the interviews deductively. My initial coding tree was informed by my questions, Bronfenbrenner’s theory, and revisions and consolidation based on my pre-coding inductive analysis.

I separated my coding tree by research questions to guide my analysis. I coded several interviews and revisited my coding tree to make changes after coding several interviews. Through extensive conversations with my advisor, I revisited and revised my coding tree to reflect the data. I repeated the same process, coding several interviews and adjusting and adding new codes to the coding tree. After additional extensive discussions with my advisor, I developed a final coding scheme that captured the main trends reported in the interview data. After coding all the data, I revisited each code again to understand nuances and subcategories within each code.
In a similar vein, I coded the interviews guided by the Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development and CASEL’s definition of socio-emotional skills. I identified and categorized the data within each ecological system, as described in the bioecological theory. For example, the role of family engagement fit within a system more proximal to the students in the summer program and the program policies fell into the most distal system.

**Saturation**

I stopped revising and consolidating my coding tree when I reached saturation. I reached saturation when I found that I needed no further codes to capture the staff’s meaning of socio-emotional skills or the implementation of socio-emotional learning during the summer program.

**Trustworthiness**

I used the following techniques to build the internal reliability of the data analysis and trustworthiness of the findings.

**Triangulation.** I used different sources of data to gather different perspectives about the meaning of socio-emotional skills and the implementation of socio-emotional learning in the UB summer program. Through in-depth interviews, I captured the staff’s perspective. Through observations, I used my perspective to understand the staff-staff and staff-student interactions. In addition, I reflected on the interactions that I observed through subsequent memos, which further helped me see the phenomenon from a retrospective point of view. Finally, I consulted internal program documents related to the summer program, including the requirements of the program as per federal law and regulations, training materials, and course materials. The internal program documents and
federal policy served as background and context to the participants’ interview responses and my observations of the staff members.

**Shadow coding.** Throughout the coding process, I met with my advisor, who shadowed approximately 40% of my coding. I coded the interviews in front of her. During the process, she often asked me to justify my decisions or probed further into what I meant by each code. We also discussed how each code was defined and why certain data fit into one code and not another. I made adjustments to the codes based on our discussions.

**Limitations**

I began this study with three main limitations. First, I did not interview the UB students, which can be problematic because, ultimately, I was not able to evaluate whether the staff’s efforts to foster socio-emotional learning opportunities were effective. After conducting the study, this first concern is more attenuated. This is because throughout the study, I identified areas of potential growth for the program that can precede an analysis of the students’ socio-emotional learning. For example, training is an area where the instructors expressed a desire for more support. In essence, I was able to gather a fair understanding of the issues affecting the staff members’ ability to help students develop socio-emotional skills. This understanding could enhance the program forward. In subsequent studies, I intend to shift my focus to the students’ perspectives.

A second limitation is that the interview participants in this case study reflect only those instructors who attended the training session on pedagogy that I was able to attend. The training sessions were not required. Less than half of the instructors attended the pedagogy session I attended. This leaves open the possibility that the instructors who attended the meeting differ from the pool of instructors who did not.
A third limitation is that, the sample is not representative of other staff members across UB Programs nationally and those programs’ plans of operation. Therefore, this study's findings should not be expected to generalize to other UB Programs. However, through the interviews with administrators, I learned that the UB Program has regional conferences where UB Programs meet and share different program components that they consider effective. The administrators of the case study program explained that many of the new ideas implemented in the summer program come from these conferences and meetings. Thus, the programs within regions borrow ideas and learn from each other. Thus, while not generalizable, the results of this study may be informative and useful to other UB Programs.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This investigation is anchored by two research questions: “How does the UB Program staff conceptualize socio-emotional skills?” and “How does the UB Program staff promote socio-emotional learning opportunities during the summer program?” In this chapter, I present the findings related to each of these questions. By way of brief foregrounding, the summer staff members’ understanding of socio-emotional skills was partial. The staff’s understanding of socio-emotional skills focused on relationship skills and placed little emphasis on responsible decision-making. Moreover, different groups of staff members (administrators, instructors, residential mentors) expressed subtle differences in their understanding of socio-emotional skills.

As for the staff’s efforts to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities, I found three summer program components that were helpful. First, the program leaders held an explicit goal to promote socio-emotional learning. Second, the leadership created a blueprint for the summer that promoted socio-emotional learning through the program’s required and permissible services. The blueprint included hiring summer staff members who shared the administrators’ same socio-emotional learning goals, training the summer staff, and creating a schedule of curricular and extra-curricular activities that would accomplish the federal policy’s required and permissible services. Third, the summer staff promoted socio-emotional learning opportunities directly through the staff-student interactions in both planned activities and during unplanned events.
Staff Understanding of Socio-Emotional Skills

Initial Understandings

At the beginning of the program, the staff members’ understanding of socio-emotional learning was partial and focused on relationship skills while rarely drawing on responsible decision-making. Subtle differences in understanding were also present across groups of staff members. In this section, I discuss these findings and provide some important caveats at the end of the section. The findings here reflect data from the pre-program interviews, given that I wanted to learn what knowledge the staff would bring to their interactions with the students before the program began.

Partial understanding with focus on relationship skills and little emphasis on responsible decision-making. At the beginning of the summer program, the UB summer staff members’ partial understanding of socio-emotional skills focused on relationship skills competence while placing little emphasis on responsible decision-making competence. To recap, relationship skills generally refer to the ability to create and maintain healthy relationships with others, while responsible decision-making refers to the ability to evaluate situations and make ethical decisions based on such evaluation. In their understanding of socio-emotional skills, the staff members focused on the importance of one-on-one interactions between any student and others. For example, when asked directly what socio-emotional skills meant to her, Edna, an instructor teaching a sophomore seminar, responded:

I think that socio-emotional things are all the interpersonal relationships that you engage with. Students in this case, or staff members, the way that you could bond, make connections with others in a significant way or in order to have better [academic] results. (Edna, personal communication, June 10, 2017)
The staff members’ conceptualization of socio-emotional skills included “understanding how people feel, and think, and process emotions in order to be able to better communicate with them” (Donna, personal communication, June 8, 2017), explained instructor Donna, and “branch[ing] out of [their] comfort” to talk to each other (Dollie, personal communication, June 23, 2017), explained Dollie, a residential mentor. Their understanding of socio-emotional skills also included the students’ ability to have difficult conversations with others who may upset them. For example, Wilda described why she thought engaging in difficult conversations was important, explaining “[W]hen ever somebody makes you upset, you always just let them know, because sometimes they’re not aware that you’re upset at them” (Wilda, personal communication, June 22, 2017). She continued on to describe an example of how she put her understanding of socio-emotional skills to practice:

I had an issue with one of my students that I didn’t know she was upset at me until she came and told me, and I was just like, “I’m happy you came and told me”…. I don’t want you to ever feel like you can’t talk to somebody that made you upset.” Me telling her that she’s like, “Yes, I know.” She apologized for not coming to me. I’m like, “It’s okay. I understand you were mad. You wanted to be by yourself.” And, I’m like, “I’m happy you came and talked to me.” (Wilda, personal communication, June 22, 2017)

In her interaction with the student, Wilda drew on her understanding of effective interpersonal communication. She was receptive and attuned to the students’ concerns and listened to the student voice her discontent without interruptions or being defensive. After the student spoke, she encouraged the student to open up and express herself to others who may upset her in the future. Wilda went beyond just explaining to the student the importance of having an open communication with others. She modeled the behavior by remaining calm and responding positively when the student raised the issue.
In the staff’s conceptualization of socio-emotional skills, the relationship skills competence was predominant. Table 4.1 illustrates this predominance. The colored rectangles represent the staff’s use of the full or partial definition of any particular skill in describing their understanding; colored rectangles indicate the staff used the full or partial definition of that socio-emotional skill to describe their understanding, while blank rectangles indicate the staff member did not reference that particular socio-emotional skill at all. Table 4.1 illustrates that out of 23 participants, 15 drew on descriptions of relationship skills to describe their understanding of socio-emotional skills.

**Table 4.1: Staff’s Conceptualization of Socio-Emotional Skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social-Awareness</th>
<th>Self-Awareness</th>
<th>Self-Management</th>
<th>Relationship Skills</th>
<th>Responsible Decision-Making</th>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talin</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnold</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bette</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dortha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edna</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddox</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rae</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilton</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bobby</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dollie</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is important to note that the staff members’ understanding of socio-emotional skills was not only focused on descriptions of relationship skills competence. The staff also drew on three other competencies—social-awareness, self-awareness, and self-management—though to a somewhat lesser extent. Generally, social awareness includes the ability to empathize and see different perspectives, including the perspectives of those from diverse backgrounds. When drawing on social awareness to describe their understanding of socio-emotional skills, the staff most often made references to the ability to empathize with others and understand different perspectives. For example, Wilton, a science instructor shared his hope to help the students develop “empathy for people in different situations” and “to get people to reflect on what it would be in somebody else’s shoes, to interact with the world in a different way” (Wilton, personal communication, June, 12, 2017).

In referencing self-awareness—the ability to accurately describe one’s emotions, thoughts and behaviors and to assess one’s own strengths and areas of growth—the staff mainly highlighted helping students build confidence and learn to identify their own emotions. To illustrate, Maddox, who provided ESL support during the summer program, explained she hoped to “make [the students] speak” and “make them be creative” because she wanted them to understand “that everything [the they contributed] has value”
(Maddox, personal communication, June 12, 2017). Similarly, Wilda, a residential mentor, hoped to help the students be confident enough to “be comfortable in expressing themselves in a way they wanted to express themselves” (Wilda, personal communication, June 22, 2017).

Finally, in drawing on self-management skills—generally described as the ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, and to self-motivate oneself toward set goals—the staff mainly referenced the ability to manage one’s emotions and time appropriately. For example, Lucy, a residential mentor, wanted to teach the students the importance of “remaining calm” and to “handle our emotions” (Lucy, personal communication, June 23, 2017). Others, like Edna, an instructor for a sophomore seminar, wanted to teach the students about “time management,” “budgeting,” and “distributing their time” appropriately (Edna, personal communication, June 10, 2017).

In sum, nearly half of all the staff members explained their understanding of socio-emotional skills making references to these three competencies: social-awareness, self-awareness, and self-management. They stressed the importance of recognizing one’s emotions and managing these emotions and one’s behaviors, and they made references to being aware of differences in society and developing an appreciation for these differences.

However, in sharing their understanding of socio-emotional skills, the staff rarely drew on the responsible decision-making competence. Only 4 summer staff members out of the 23 participants referenced this skill. In general, these four staff members explained that they hoped the summer program students would learn to make independent, mature choices that took possible consequences into account and would learn to read and write critically. For example, Joanne described that one of her main goals for the summer was to
teach students “to be able to make good choices or be less indecisive” (Joanne, personal communication, June 22, 2017), and Donna, an instructor, hoped to help the students learn about “decision-making, and understanding possible consequences” (Donna, personal communication, June 8, 2017). The other two staff members made similar statements.

Subtle differences across the staff’s understanding of socio-emotional skills.

Across the three groups of staff members—administrators, instructors, and residential mentors—instructors displayed a relatively more comprehensive understanding of socio-emotional skills when compared to the administrators and the residential mentors. The instructors’ understanding of socio-emotional skills generally included most or all of the socio-emotional competencies. For example, Donna’s response to a question about her views on socio-emotional skills spanned several socio-emotional skills:

I guess specially in teaching and learning, socio-emotional skills would be understanding how people feel, and think, and process emotions in order to be able to better communicate with them. As a teacher, it has a lot to do with helping students understand and grow as learners and things that come up, like trauma or discomfort or cultural conflicts or socio-emotional factors that are really important in the classroom, because they can either shut down a student’s ability to learn or stay engaged. And a teacher and classmates who are attuned to the socio-emotional issues can help students thrive. (Donna, personal communication, June 8, 2017)

In her response, Donna drew attention to relationship skills when explaining how socio-emotional skills relate to better communication with others, self-awareness when explaining the importance of being attuned to trauma or discomfort, and social awareness when referencing awareness of potential cultural conflicts. Her subsequent response to a question that asked her to describe what activities she would use to teach socio-emotional skills throughout the summer drew on descriptions of three socio-emotional competencies, namely self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making:
[T]he deliberations, decision-making and understanding possible consequences, I would say is definitely one way of teaching socio-emotional skills. There’s a lot of hidden curriculum around that, too. When I show videos, I do a little spiel about like, this might be frightening for these reasons, or introducing myself with my pronouns, or reminding people . . . [about] things they should keep in mind during discussion: Like, “Don’t start a statement with no. Don’t call people names.” By expressing to students that they have a right to be safe in class and enforcing that, is more part of the hidden curriculum than it is part of the academic curriculum. (Donna, personal communication, June 8, 2017)

Here, she referenced responsible decision-making in relation to the deliberations project, a collaborative project that culminated in a debate-style presentation. She also referenced self-awareness when discussing how she might help students acknowledge potential fear. She incorporated responsible decision-making and self-management when discussing practicing self-restriction during discussions. In essence, similar to most of the other instructors, Donna demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of socio-emotional skills throughout the interview.

In contrast, in general, the residential mentors’ and administrators’ understanding was more acutely focused on one or two skills. As Table 4.1 illustrates, the residential mentors focused on relationship skills and made few references to self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making. They did not make any reference to social awareness to describe their understanding of socio-emotional skills. Similar to the residential mentors, the administrators also focused on relationship skills when describing socio-emotional skills and made several references to social awareness. They did not reference self-awareness at all.

**Post-Program Interview**

In the post-program interviews, participants expressed a more comprehensive understanding of socio-emotional skills. For example, when answering which socio-
emotional skills the program set out to teach the students during the summer program,
Talin, the youngest counselor, looked at the two-page document (“two-page scaffold”) describing the five, major socio-emotional competencies (see Appendix A) and explained that he did not seek to teach the students any socio-emotional skills but that opportunities arose all of the time:

For example, there was some cultural discord this summer. This is an opportunity to talk about social awareness let’s say. I wasn’t thinking in my head, “Now’s a great time to talk about social awareness.” These things come up, and then it gives me the opportunity to shed light. But by me shedding light, I’m simply asking them questions about how they feel. What does it mean to you when someone disagrees with the music that you play? What does it mean to you when somebody doesn’t like the language that you speak? How does that make you feel? And then how would you feel if you were in someone else’s shoes? These are opportunities for our students to think a little deeper about these issues that they experience every day, but they don’t stop to think about what it means, how it affects them, and how it affects others. (Talin, personal communication, August 2, 2017)

Other participants made multiple connections in succession. For example, when asked what specific socio-emotional skills she set out to teach the students at the beginning of the program, Dortha, an instructor, shared multiple examples where students practiced socio-emotional skills:

I think what I’ve been sharing with you has definitely touched on appreciating diversity, respect for others. So, the social awareness category, I think definitely jumps out at me. The self-awareness [category] as well, especially self-confidence, strengths, and identifying emotions. Especially when I was talking about the student who had a hard time not taking things personally or taking things personally but had to counter that. Relationship skills definitely—with the deliberations [class] they had to communicate a lot with each other in different ways whether it was written, verbal, coming together as teamwork, all those different things. The relationship-building—I think that’s what the 3-hour block of time for that class really helped to create. I was really happy about that teamwork. Definitely with the deliberation project—that was a huge amount of teamwork, and I’m really proud of my students. [I’d] say they did a fantastic job with that. (Dortha, personal communication, July 13, 2017)
Talin’s and Dortha’s responses are noteworthy for several reasons. Similar to many others, after looking at the two-page scaffold, they began to make a connection between their (perhaps newly enhanced) understanding of socio-emotional skills and practice. Both staff members were also able to identify how they helped the students with the skills they referenced. More importantly, they identified that they were in fact promoting socio-emotional skills without conscious awareness that they were doing so. In other words, the staff were promoting socio-emotional skills even as they were focused on other program activities, such as deliberations.

Caveats

In this subsection, I discuss two caveats that inform the staff’s understanding of socio-emotional skills: differences in pre- and post-program responses and challenges in obtaining responses to the staff’s understanding of socio-emotional learning.

Pre- and post-program differences. The participants expressed a deeper understanding of socio-emotional skills in the post-program interviews than in the pre-program interviews. During the recruitment phase, I shared with the potential participants that the study focused on socio-emotional learning in UB. The director asked me to explain what I meant by socio-emotional learning. I then explained that socio-emotional learning focuses on what some call “soft skills” in contrast to other academic skills; I received a nod in agreement from the people in the room. I used this general description because I wanted to learn how the staff members themselves understood socio-emotional learning without drawing on my own explanation.

To learn about how the program staff members understood socio-emotional skills during the pre-program interviews, I began by asking the participants directly what they
understood socio-emotional skills to be. However, I realized that this approach had the effect of putting the participants on the spot, or as one participant said, “[I] feel like I’m taking an exam I didn’t prepare for” (Maddox, personal communication, June 12, 2017).

After the first few interviews, I removed that question from the interview protocol and learned how each participant understood socio-emotional skills through other questions. These other questions asked the participants about how UB policies promote or hinder socio-emotional learning and about what socio-emotional skills participants wanted to teach the students, to name two specific questions.

As illustrated above, the participants expressed a deeper understanding of socio-emotional skills in the post-program interviews. Part of this may have been due to priming from the first interview, part may be due to training, or this may be partly explicable due to the use of minimal scaffold that I employed, namely, the two-page document scaffold (see Appendix A). At the beginning of each post-program interview, I described the two-page scaffold to the participants briefly, providing additional information if the participants asked for further clarification, and explained to them that the document was meant to help them draw connections to their student interactions and to potentially remind them about interactions they might have not had at the forefront prior to our interviews. I then proceeded to the interview questions. For these or other reasons, participants could more fully articulate their understanding of socio-emotional skills in their second interview. They expressed a deeper understanding of the socio-emotional competencies.

Not all participants conducted the post-program interviews in person, in which case I emailed them the two-page scaffold and waited until they confirmed that they received the document and some explained that they opened up the attachment. Given this distance
limitation, it is not entirely clear whether all the participants drew on the two-page scaffold for all their answers or whether they drew on the document at all. However, it is important to note that during the in-person interviews, the majority of staff members looked at the document throughout the interviews, particularly when I asked them to describe the different socio-emotional skills they were trying to teach the students.

When I asked them to describe the different socio-emotional skills they were trying to teach, something interesting happened. The participants typically turned to the document and would describe examples that they could identify where the students were exercising a particular socio-emotional skill. As described above in the post-program interview section, these examples ran the socio-emotional skills gamut.

**Challenges.** One challenge I faced in interpreting the UB Summer Program staff’s understanding of socio-emotional skills is that I largely did not ask them directly about their understanding. I was not expecting that the participants would be able to verbalize and articulate socio-emotional skills using the five competencies at the beginning of the program. Instead, I analyzed their responses and grouped these into the socio-emotional competencies that best captured the participants’ descriptions. It could be that they had a full understanding of socio-emotional skills and did not articulate that understanding, given that I did not ask them directly. After multiple readings of the transcripts and analysis of the data, this possibility became increasingly less likely for the following reasons.

When I asked them to explain what socio-emotional skills they would like to teach the students, some participants asked for further clarification of the meaning of socio-emotional skills. I responded with “soft skills,” a similar explanation to the one I gave the
participants during recruitment to avoid giving them more information that others
interviewees did not have. Other staff members prefaced their answers with comments
such as “If I break it down, socio-emotional learning sounds to me like . . .” (Wilton,
personal communication, June 12, 2017), or followed their answers with comments such as
“. . . but again, the way I defined [socio-emotional skills] is probably pretty basic. Based on
that definition, . . .” (Arnold, personal communication, June 9, 2017). Phrases such as these
signaled that they had a partial understanding, even after the summer training. I gleaned
the participants’ partial understanding by considering each entire first interview, looking at
each entire transcript to see whether they made references to their understanding of socio-
emotional skills while answering any other questions, and looking for phrases or words
that might also signal understanding or lack thereof.

A second challenge I faced was the difficulty in asking the director all of the protocol
questions and thereby giving her an opportunity to describe socio-emotional skills. After
the pre- and post-program interviews, the director did not describe socio-emotional skills
or learning. Instead she referred to the concept as “socio-emotional skills ‘soft skills’”
(Rosie, personal communication, June 15, 2017). Due to her lengthy responses to every
question, I realized I would not be able to get her answers to all the questions. Given this
background, the subsection on the staff members’ understanding on socio-emotional skills
described above lacks the director’s understanding of socio-emotional skills. However,
during her second interview, as she held the two-page scaffold explaining the five socio-
emotional competencies, she stated that her vision for the program was to promote all
socio-emotional skills.
Staff Efforts to Promote Socio-Emotional Learning

After analyzing the data, I found three summer program components that were helpful in the staff’s efforts to promote socio-emotional learning in the summer program. First, the program leaders held an explicit goal to promote socio-emotional learning. Second, the leadership created a blueprint for the summer that promoted socio-emotional learning through the program’s required and permissible services. The blueprint included hiring summer staff members who would likely also promote the socio-emotional learning goals, training the summer staff, and creating a schedule with curricular and extra-curricular activities that would accomplish the federal policy’s required and permissible services. Third, in the implementation, the summer staff promoted socio-emotional learning directly through the staff-student interactions. In addition, the staff’s response to unplanned events often incorporated opportunities to advance students’ socio-emotional learning. The relationships among these components are presented in Figure 4.1.
In this section, I describe each of the three summer components. In addition, when I discuss Component 3, implementation, I will also describe how the summer staff often promoted socio-emotional learning in response to unplanned events.

**Leadership’s Explicit Goal to Promote Socio-Emotional Learning**

Both the director and assistant director were responsible for planning the summer program, and both had an explicit goal to promote socio-emotional learning in UB through the required and permissible summer activities. For example, during the post-program interview, while pointing at the two-page scaffold listing the five socio-emotional competencies, the director exclaimed, “To see these spelled out like this is a much better way of sharing with instructors that this [promoting socio-emotional learning] is what our goal is” (Rosie, personal communication, July 20, 2017). She further explained that as the
summer staff provided other required activities, she hoped they would also implicitly promote socio-emotional learning opportunities:

To be perfectly honest with you, seeing these [socio-emotional competencies] spelled out... I haven’t looked at that and thought, “Yes, that [competency] applies here and that [competency] applies there and this one [competency] applies here.” While we do [the required and permissible activities], we are hitting on these [competencies].” . . . [H]aving an awareness of all of these things and having a student developing him- or herself in all of these areas would make their academic year much more successful going forward and make anything that they do help them to be much more successful. . . . Your goal may be to get them to do calculus, but in the process of doing calculus, . . . I want them to be developed as better world citizens. (Rosie, personal communication, July 20, 2017)

In this passage the director was clear that a key goal for the UB Program was to promote socio-emotional learning through required and permissible program services. She made two noteworthy connections. First, she understood that helping the students grow their socio-emotional competencies would ultimately help the students perform better in their academics. Second, she explained that promoting socio-emotional learning was also attainable partly through the required services, for example by helping students become well-rounded citizens while learning math.

The assistant director was also explicit about his goal to promote socio-emotional learning. When asked about his goals for the summer program he first stated two goals in line with the federal policy: “Number one, it’s the summer like the college experience. . . . Secondly, it’s to get them prepared for their next year in high school” (Truman, personal communication, June 16, 2017). However, his third goal for the summer went beyond the explicit program requirements. He described it in terms of 21st century skills. Those skills overlap with socio-emotional skills, focusing on problem solving, making ethical decisions, collaborating with others, and understanding others’ perspectives (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).
Then lastly, what I told the students was that [the program seeks], to develop them into 21st century global citizens. It’s that challenge of going beyond that rural bubble in their communities, or that migrant bubble beyond their communities, or that urban bubble, or whatever that bubble is, and be able to engage the global community. Because the reality of it is, is that when they go to college, and go on to life, they're going to be in some way, shape, or form involved with global culture. Those are what I see are the goals of the summer program. (Truman, personal communication, June 16, 2017)

**Blueprint**

In this study, I define the program blueprint as a set of components present in the summer program that were conducive to the staff's promotion of socio-emotional learning opportunities. Three components were part of the summer program blueprint: hiring staff who would likely promote socio-emotional learning, providing training on socio-emotional skills or learning, and creating a schedule conducive to socio-emotional learning.

**Hiring staff who would likely promote socio-emotional learning.** Each summer, the director and assistant director hire summer staff. My analysis of the data illustrate how hiring serves to advance the administrators' goal to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities. First, the director and assistant director were intentional in hiring summer staff who had characteristics that the program leaders thought might help promote socio-emotional learning. The three most prominent characteristics included diversity, experience relevant to promoting socio-emotional learning, and/or applicants' expressed aim to promote socio-emotional learning despite little or no prior relevant experience. Second, the summer staff expressed personal goals to promote socio-emotional learning, though they used a variety of terms to convey such goals.

**Intentional hiring to promote socio-emotional learning.** Summer staff must be able and willing to advance the same set of program policies and goals, and for this reason, the administrators were intentional about who they hired. The program leaders
intentionally sought to hire summer staff who would likely promote socio-emotional learning opportunities. Holden, the most senior program counselor, who assisted the director and assistant director in hiring the residential summer staff, explained the administrators’ goal as follows: “We purposely tried to hire staff that would be connecting with the students and worrying about their needs” (Holden, personal communication, June 16, 2017).

The following three characteristics were helpful considerations in hiring summer staff who would promote socio-emotional learning opportunities throughout the summer program. These characteristics were not mutually exclusive, but to maintain clarity, I describe them separately.

**Diversity.** Administrators highly favored a diverse summer staff. They assumed that staff diversity best served the diverse group of students, because the students would likely feel represented in the staff. The longest serving counselor was clear on the administrators’ goal to create a diverse summer staff. She explained:

Our staff is pretty diverse. That’s one of the things that we do on purpose, really. There’s a lot of diversity. . . . There is [an instructor] from Colombia. We really have a variety, we have black, white. . . . We wanted to make sure that also they’re all—like the kids have someone that looks like them, too. (Holden, personal communication, June 16, 2017)

The director similarly saw diversity as an important asset, one that enabled the summer staff to understand how to help the diverse group of students. She explained:

I think we have a very diverse instructional staff, racially, ethnically, racially, and just diversity of thought, diversity of programming. Part of [the staff’s preparation to work with and help the students] is also happening in just the fact that when teachers are getting together, they’re all diverse. (Rosie, personal communication, June 15, 2017)
The analysis of interview data and observations showed that diversity helped the staff to promote socio-emotional learning on multiple occasions throughout the summer program. For example, Edna, an instructor for a sophomore college preparation seminar, was a native Spanish speaker who used her background to promote social awareness in the classroom. She described her efforts to promote empathy:

I mentioned I am from Mexico, and I do understand—I asked the people who speak Spanish to raise their hands and it was almost half of my class. So, I said, “As you do, I always struggle with my language [and] my English, and I still do today. I completely empathize with you. And I’m going to ask students who do not speak Spanish to really [try to] understand [those who do speak Spanish], being respectful of this or [of] their classmates, because it’s a struggle every day. And it’s not easy [to quickly understand] what they hear when they speak two languages. Let’s not laugh or make fun of anyone here. Just trying to be empathetic and make others understand their side, too. (Edna, personal communication, July 19, 2017)

Dortha, another instructor, was a Colombian immigrant. Like Edna, Dortha used her platform to promote social awareness of historical social movements that happened in the United States and that she perceived students often did not hear much about, such as the Chicano movement. She also used these discussions of historical social movements to promote greater self-awareness. She explained her efforts to promote socio-emotional learning through these class discussions as follows:

I was starting to tell them about the Mexican-American War and [how] we didn’t cross the border. The border crossed us. . . . They were like, we want to know more about this stuff. We’ve never heard about this. They actually asked me if we could have time to talk more about these topics . . . [T]hey love just hearing me lecture about it, just me talking about it—Spanish-Cuban-American War and how the United States acquired Puerto Rico . . . [O]ne of the students . . . was interested in the Mexican-American War so much that he changed his project to want to do research on that, because he is of Mexican background. And he actually did his capstone research project about the Chicano movement in the U.S. and learned a lot that he never knew about. Another one of the students, through these conversations—one of the things that I highlighted which is very close to my heart is this idea of “testimonio:” our voices are valid, our experiences are valid as individuals and coming together in a community. She decided to do her research project as an auto-ethnographic piece. She didn’t know that word before. [Her
project] was [on] her experience leaving her home country of the [Dominican Republic] to come to the United States. Another student decided to do her research about Hispanic culture in the United States and the diversity, what that represents and how it influences U.S. culture. Another student decided to do her project about women of color and the search of equality in the U.S. . . . All those came out of these discussions. (Dortha, personal communication, July 13, 2017)

Many of the other diverse staff members shared similar instances where they used their diverse backgrounds to make connections with students. Such comments illustrate how diversity was an asset to promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities.

**Relevant experience.** The administrators shared that relevant experience could be helpful to the staff when promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities. For example, consider Holden’s acknowledgment of the residential coordinator’s experience and how this experience was beneficial during the summer program:

This year we have a great residential coordinator. He’s older. A lot of times we have college students that may not be aware of the students’ needs. They’re kids themselves. They might be 19-years-old. But this year I feel pretty good about it, because [the residential coordinator] is really good. He knows about the emotional, social. He thinks about those kids all the time. He gets them popsicles. He gets them snacks just to make them feel like they’re welcomed here. Even little things like that are really important for the kids. They keep telling me, “He worries about us. He brings us snacks, and he checks in with us.” You don’t always have that . . . . (Holden, personal communication, June 16, 2017)

The assistant director, Truman, also referenced the residential coordinator’s experience. He explained that the coordinator’s experience promotes relationship skills through team building, because the coordinator is knowledgeable:

I think we did a really good job of hiring a good residential staff, and the residential coordinator is a man who is experienced. He’s an area coordinator here on campus. He knows how to run [an] Upward Bound summer program, because he’s done it [before]. . . . The [residential coordinator] is very, very . . . experienced. He has his background in substance abuse counseling, social work, that sort of thing. He’s very knowledgeable about this and very experienced. We basically have been hands-off in terms of some of the things that he does team-building wise . . . . (Truman, personal communication, June 16, 2017)
While the administrators did not make reference to all of the summer staff’s relevant experience, the summer staff composition included several staff members who had substantial relevant experience that helped them promote socio-emotional learning opportunities. Some summer staff had worked with underserved populations prior to joining the UB summer program. For example, one of the counselors, had worked with migrant populations for many years. Through these interactions she learned about the needs of migrant populations, children living in poverty, and adolescents who might face emotional challenges or social anxiety. She explained how her experience had helped her forge meaningful relationships with the students and their families, facilitating delivery of program services:

I just have this thing with the migrants. I think it’s because I’ve been working so long with them, and I know those families. I know what they’re going through. I know their troubles, and it’s so much easier to communicate and transfer the services. . . . The migrant families, I’ve gained their trust. It takes a while to do that. (Cecile, personal communication, June 20, 2017)

Other summer staff members had experience in the classroom. Experience in the classroom included working with high school or college students, working in impoverished inner cities, and working with children who had experienced trauma.

Minimal experience but shared vision. The administrators also hired summer staff members who were not experienced but expressed the same vision regarding socio-emotional learning. For example, Talin, the youngest counselor, explained how his willingness to create meaningful relationships with the students and his desire to help the students improve their lives was likely a factor that contributed to his hiring. He shared:

I have zero counselor training. No counselor training from Upward Bound, but I learn through experience, and I’ve been told that my temperament is effective and my communication style is effective as a counselor. And, I’m continuing to learn and grow as a counselor, but it’s something that I’m very passionate about. I think that I
was selected because of my potential as a counselor. However, I didn’t go to college to be a counselor. I have no counseling training. I’ve just, throughout my graduate studies, developed an interest in communicating with individuals, and that’s my approach. I don’t approach a conversation as simply—it just means more to me. When I converse with students, I try to figure out what’s going on in their lives, what I can do to help them improve. (Talin, personal communication, June 16, 2017)

This kind of expressed desire and willingness to work along with other staff members to provide services to the students and to improve their lives were a deciding factor in hiring summer staff members. During casual conversations with the director, she expressed to me that part of the hiring criteria was the potential employee’s vision to help the students in a holistic way, the same vision as the program’s leaders.

**Staff goals to promote socio-emotional learning.** All participants expressed a desire to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities during the summer program. Some participants expressed their socio-emotional learning objectives when I asked them about what socio-emotional skills they were intentional about teaching the students during the summer. For example, Wilber a residential mentor, answered as follows when I asked him directly about what socio-emotional skills he hoped to teach:

Something I have been talking to a couple of my students about is just like using [specific phrases in] conversation, like *how*, and *what*, and looking at that. I want to explain to the students how important body language is as well. And there are many easily readable things that people do naturally that are very obvious, that are very telling, and they might not even notice it. (Wilber, personal communication, June 22, 2017)

Others did not refer directly to socio-emotional learning objectives but still shared objectives that entailed fostering socio-emotional learning opportunities. For example, consider Travis, a residential mentor who had no relevant experience prior to joining the summer program. When I asked him to share what he hoped to teach the students during the summer, he responded:
What I really want to teach them? What I encourage a lot, in my group, is them making their own decisions by themselves, for themselves. I feel it’s going to help you everywhere. In my high school, you have a lot of people telling you what to do. It only teaches you what decisions you should make, consequences. What I feel I want to teach them is [that] they are responsible for themselves. Every decision they make has consequences. I want them to be able to make the right choice on their own. That’s what I want to teach them. At the end of the program, I want them to just be able to make their own choices on their own without any help. (Travis, personal communication, June 21, 2017)

Travis, as well as a few other participants, hoped to promote socio-emotional learning during the summer without labeling it as such. In essence, a common thread across the participants is that they share a passion to improve the lives of the students by teaching them one or several socio-emotional skills, albeit not always identified as such and despite the fact that such skill development is not a formal requirement in their job duties.

**Providing summer training.** The summer training also promoted socio-emotional learning. The administrators coordinated and offered four different trainings for the summer staff: student safety, pedagogy, ethical literacy, and socio-emotional skills. Below I describe each of the trainings.

**Student safety trainings for all summer staff.** The student safety trainings were mandatory for all summer staff and helped promote socio-emotional learning opportunities. The program provided at least two trainings on student safety. First, all summer staff members completed an online module on reporting suspected child abuse that took approximately one hour. Second, the residential mentors’ week-long training covered program policies to help ensure student safety. The policies included rules on communicating and reporting concerns regarding students and crisis management. This training promoted socio-emotional learning by teaching the staff members about how to intervene when the students experienced difficulties with their socio-emotional skills. For
example, Travis, a residential mentor explained that the training covered “what to do if a kid is really depressed, or signs to look out for, signs of mood changes to see if they are having some sort of issue” (Travis, personal communication, June 21, 2017).

**Pedagogy trainings for instructors.** The administrators offered two optional pedagogy seminars trainings for summer instructors, both of which promoted socio-emotional learning directly. Each seminar was 3-hours long; one took place one month before the summer program, and the second took place one week before. The seminars focused on lesson planning, student motivation, and the “growth mind-set,” a belief that one’s cognitive abilities can be developed (Dweck, 2006). The seminar instructor explained the time allocation for topics and the purpose of these trainings as follows:

> I wanted to find a balance between doing things like lesson planning and more classroom management ideas. Also, talking about things like student motivation and giving students feedback, because I think with the group of kids that are in this program, that those types of topics are important. Because many of these kids, maybe, don’t feel motivated in school or they don’t have family members or other mentors to make them feel motivated, or like they can be successful. I thought it would be important to talk about those things. I would say I spend about 50% of the time talking about lesson planning and classroom management, and then I spend about 50% of the time talking about feedback, setting goals, motivation, where these students are at in their lives. (Brooklyn, personal communication, June 20, 2017)

The administrators’ aimed to promote self-awareness and self-management by focusing these two trainings on providing feedback to the students, helping them learn how to set goals, and how to remain motivated in the classroom and beyond.

**Ethical literacy training for instructors.** The administrators invited a university organization to give two optional ethical literacy trainings for the summer instructors, one session in April and one a week prior to the beginning of the summer program, both of which promoted responsible decision-making. The director estimated that about 70% of the instructors attended.
The trainings focused on how to teach ethical decision-making in the classroom. However, according to a few instructors, the training did not provide many specifics. For example, Brooklyn, one of the instructors who attended the session described it as less of a training and “more of a food for thought type of thing” (Brooklyn, personal communication, June 20, 2017). Rae, a second instructor, explained that the instructors received “ethical agency training, and then there isn’t any follow-up that really walks us through” (Rae, personal communication, July 14, 2017).

Although these two trainings were intended to promote responsible decision-making, one of the five socio-emotional competencies, the instructors indicated that training could be strengthened by including some specifics about how ethics might be incorporated into classroom work.

*Socio-emotional skills training for residential mentors.* The administrators required all residential mentors to participate in training on relationship skills. The training on relationship skills was part of the residential mentors’ required week-long training that took place the week before the summer program began. The time dedicated to learning about various socio-emotional skills was brief compared to the time dedicated to other matters during the training.

To better understand the allocation of time to the various socio-emotional skills, I provide the breakdown of the week-long training session and the number of topics covered during the training. Residential mentors trained Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., with lunch and dinner breaks in between.
Table 4.2: Residential Staff Schedule for Training Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 a.m. to 12 p.m.</td>
<td>Morning Training Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 p.m. to 4 p.m.</td>
<td>Afternoon Training Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner/Free Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 p.m. to 8 p.m.</td>
<td>Evening Training Session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After this, from 8:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., the instructors prepared the student residence halls for students’ arrival, while also enjoying some free time. The week-long training focused primarily on summer rules, a detailed overview of residential mentors’ daily duties and obligations, and how to promote student safety throughout the summer. Three sections of the week-long training focused on relationship skills. First, each training session began with an ice-breaker or team-building activity that involved all residential mentors and lasted approximately thirty minutes. The icebreakers promoted relationship skills among the residential mentors and also modeled activities that the residential mentors could then use to help build relationship skills among the students. Second, on Tuesday, the residential coordinator held a session that lasted just under two hours, titled “Moving Barriers & Understanding Boundaries of Relationship Building with our Students.” The focus of this session was on building relationships with the students and helping the students build confidence and relationships with other students. The session emphasized eight main points illustrated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: “Moving Barriers & Understanding Boundaries of Relationship Building with our Students” Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learn a few good icebreakers</td>
<td>Use icebreakers to help the students get to know each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose “favorites”-one at a time</td>
<td>Every day, spend quality time with the students, listening to them and talking to them about the summer or life in general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat meals with your group and students as often as possible</td>
<td>The schedule is packed. Therefore, meal times are opportunities to chat with the students. Establish this routine early.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise in public, critique in private</td>
<td>Praise the students in front of others. This will help them build self-esteem, reinforces respect, and helps you build stronger relationships with the students. When discipline issues arise, address these privately. The students will listen when you respect their feelings and address them in private.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a group identity</td>
<td>To promote team-building and collaboration, create a group identity such as secret handshakes, group cheers, special activities during lunch, or a group chant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love your job!</td>
<td>Get excited about your job, and enjoy the summer experience along with the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know your boundaries</td>
<td>Remember that foremost you are a staff member. Therefore, establish boundaries from the beginning. Take advantage of your supervisors’ experience; reach out when you need help with the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit-connect-complete</td>
<td>Commit to your summer role, connect with the students, and complete your responsibilities until the end of the program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Residential Mentor Training Supplement.*

Third, on Wednesday, during the afternoon session a guest speaker trained the residential staff on listening skills, and during the evening training session, the residential coordinator discussed how to discipline students while being receptive to the students’ needs. Collectively, both lasted less than two hours. To explain and model listening skills during a conversation, the guest speaker presented hypotheticals and role played what preferred listening skills look like compared to poor listening skills. The residential coordinator explained the importance of being assertive when confronting student disciplinary issues and being open to compromise, ending the conversation with an open invitation to discuss the matter further, and to use this type of confrontation to improve the matter not punish the student.
**Strength and potential drawback of the trainings.** Attending the training sessions provided opportunities for the UB staff to learn about how to promote socio-emotional learning through the summer program activities. As evidenced above, each of the training sessions offered for the summer staff promoted socio-emotional skills to varying degrees. According to the staff members, some trainings, like the ethical literacy, could be further improved or supplemented. And other trainings, like the residential mentors’ training sessions were helpful in teaching the summer staff how to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities. I gleaned the potential helpfulness of the trainings from the residential mentors’ interviews. Five out of the 8 residential mentors who participated in the study wanted to teach relationship skills, including listening skills, to the students. In addition, as described in the first section of this chapter, the residential mentors’ understanding of socio-emotional skills drew mainly on relationship skills.

A potential drawback of the trainings is that not all trainings were mandatory. As illustrated in Table 4.4 below, only the student safety and the residential mentors’ week-long training were required.

**Table 4.4: Mandatory and Non-Mandatory Summer Staff Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student Safety</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Ethical Literacy</th>
<th>Socio-Emotional Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrators</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructors</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residential</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ = mandatory
x = not mandatory
Creating a Summer Schedule that Promoted Socio-Emotional Learning. The administrators designed a summer schedule packed with curricular and extra-curricular activities that could potentially promote socio-emotional learning. In this subsection, I first discuss the required services and how these were designed and might promote socio-emotional learning opportunities. Then, I discuss the permissible activities and how these were especially designed to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities during the summer.

**Required services.** In accordance with the federal law and regulations, the program provided services that prepared the students for the next academic year and for college. These services included academic courses, specifically: science, math, deliberations/English, capstone research, and college preparation seminars. Table 4.5 below outlines the amount of time scheduled for each course and the days offered.

**Table 4.5: Required Program Courses and Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summer Courses</th>
<th>Time Allotted</th>
<th>Days Offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science (e.g., geo-science, physics, chemistry)</td>
<td>1 hour, 40 minutes</td>
<td>M, T, Th, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math (e.g., algebra, pre-calculus, calculus)</td>
<td>50 minutes</td>
<td>M, T, Th, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberations/English</td>
<td>1 hour, 45 minutes</td>
<td>M, T, Th, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capstone research</td>
<td>50 minutes</td>
<td>M, T, Th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College prep seminar</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
<td>T, Th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College visits out of town (seniors only)</td>
<td>full days out of town</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore college housing program (sophomores, juniors)</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College fair (all students)</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>One time event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M = Monday, T = Tuesday, W = Wednesday, Th = Thursday, F = Friday
The administrators were intentional in promoting socio-emotional learning through these classes. Both the director and the assistant director explained that socio-emotional learning opportunities were interwoven throughout these courses. For example, the assistant director explained the following about the required classes:

I think [promoting 21st century skills is] somehow interwoven throughout the courses. [In] the classes that the students took, in some way, shape, or form, some of those skills were developed. Also, during one of our [college prep seminars], the person who works with the rising seniors, they really focus on leadership and those other type of 21st century skills that are needed. . . . For example, the deliberations’ piece, that teamwork and communication aspect is already woven within it. It’s almost intentional in that case. (Truman, personal communication, July 20, 2017)

The director similarly made several references to how other courses would also promote socio-emotional learning. For example, she explained that the math instructors’ “goal may be to [to] do calculus, but in the process of doing calculus, I want them to—I always use, ‘I want them to be developed as better world citizens’” (Rosie, personal communication, July 20, 2017). Essentially, some of the required courses have frameworks intended to promote socio-emotional skills, such as the teamwork and communication pieces of the deliberations class. In other courses, such as math, the hope is that the instructors find ways to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities.

Permissible services. After ensuring that all required services were in the schedule, the administrators built extra-curricular activities into the schedule to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities. These activities were sometimes offered daily, every other day, and sometimes as one-time events. Table 4.6 below lists the activities, a brief description of each activity, and the socio-emotional skills potentially furthered through the activity. The latter are based on my observations and the staff’s descriptions of how the activities played out. Thus, even though an activity could potentially promote all five
competencies, I observed and the staff reported that the activity only promoted one or a few skill(s). For example, the staff described the blood drive as an activity that helped students potentially learn about working with others (relationship skills) and become more empathetic (social awareness).

Table 4.6: Permissible Program Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Socio-Emotional Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two-day leadership seminar</td>
<td>Discussed traits of being leader</td>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team-building relationships</td>
<td>Participated in activities alongside other students to achieve a common goal</td>
<td>Relationship skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal personalities team-building activity</td>
<td>Learned about group members through the group members’ descriptions of their own personalities using descriptions of animals’ personalities</td>
<td>Relationship skills, self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Festival (seniors only)</td>
<td>Worked with other students at the festival, e.g., preparing nitrogen ice cream with partner student</td>
<td>Relationships skills, self-management, social awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty mixer</td>
<td>Met university faculty members and learned about the steps they took to get to their position</td>
<td>Self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for talent show</td>
<td>Worked with group members on talent show performances</td>
<td>Relationship skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keynote speaker</td>
<td>Listened to state’s secretary of education’s journey from humble beginnings to his job as secretary</td>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing letters in support of TRIO</td>
<td>Reflect on how UB Program has influenced your life and why support the program</td>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice cream social</td>
<td>Spend time with your residential mentors and group members while enjoying ice cream</td>
<td>Relationship skills, social awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UB Olympics</td>
<td>Compete in team sports</td>
<td>Relationship skills, self-management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical play</td>
<td>Watched a play out of town</td>
<td>Social awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pool</td>
<td>Spent time with other students and with residential mentors</td>
<td>Relationship skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball game</td>
<td>Attended a baseball game with all UB summer students</td>
<td>Relationship skills, social awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astrofest</td>
<td>Attended a festival of astronomy in groups</td>
<td>Relationship skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talent show</td>
<td>Prepared for and presented at the talent show in groups, and watched other students perform, e.g., cultural dances</td>
<td>Relationship skills, social awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research presentations</td>
<td>Presented and learned about a variety of topics (e.g., social group movements and first-generation immigrants) at poster presentation</td>
<td>Social-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talent show</td>
<td>Prepared for and presented at the talent show in groups, and watched other students perform, e.g., cultural dances</td>
<td>Relationship skills, social awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood drive</td>
<td>Recruited blood donors</td>
<td>Social-awareness, relationship skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service</td>
<td>Worked with other students planting at local botanical garden</td>
<td>Relationship skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Mentor seminars</td>
<td>Joined other group members for icebreakers and other team activities</td>
<td>Relationship skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreams/goals interactive workshop</td>
<td>Created individual dreamcatchers</td>
<td>Self-awareness, self-management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get moving</td>
<td>Participated in team sports</td>
<td>Relationship skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical adventures (seniors only)</td>
<td>Worked with team members on an outdoors challenge course</td>
<td>Relationship skills, self-awareness, responsible decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York City trip</td>
<td>Visited historical monuments, attended a Broadway show, and learned to navigate the city in teams</td>
<td>Relationship skills, social awareness, self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured free time, including siesta time and time to visit downtown</td>
<td>Spent time getting to know residential mentors and other students, visiting downtown in groups, and playing ping-pong or billiards with others</td>
<td>Relationship skills, social awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study hall</td>
<td>50-minute blocks daily, potentially for studying</td>
<td>Responsible decision-making, relationship skills, self-management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: UB Summer Program Schedule.*

The program leaders were intentional in using the extra-curricular activities to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities, as was true with regard to the required
services. For example, when asked about how the program helped the students develop
21st century skills, the assistant director explained:

I think we did it a couple of ways... [T]he 21st century competencies is [sic] teamwork and communication. And, so Vertical Adventures [a field trip for seniors] focuses on teamwork and communication because that was—students were urged to go on ropes course. They’re doing it as a team, and they have to communicate to think problems out. It’s problem solving, and that’s part of it. I think that the teamwork and communication pieces also occurred during the [residential mentors] group seminars that the [residential coordinator] led. (Truman, personal communication, July 20, 2017)

The director, the final decision-maker of the schedule, also voiced her intention to use the schedule to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities:

[W]e adjusted the schedule so it wasn’t—so that they had siesta time as a choice. That’s giving them the ability to choose what they want to do. They have some freedom in study hall to choose what they want to do as opposed to what they are required to do. (Rosie, personal communication, July 20, 2017)

In addition to using scheduling as a venue for promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities, ratios of UB students to staff were kept low. On average, there was 1 teacher and 1 residential mentor for every 10 students. Holden, the most senior program counselor, shared: “[W]e do things intentionally, like as far as having smaller groups. [The instructors and residential mentors] get to know that certain group better. . . . We do a lot of team-building. We have the [residential coordinator] . . . [who worked to] to make it a community in the dorms” (Holden, personal communication, July 28, 2017).

Caveat. Though the administrators were intentional in creating a schedule to promote socio-emotional learning, the instructors and residential mentors were not aware of the intention. Both program leaders expressed their hope to be clearer about this message moving forward. The assistant director explained the lack of clarity about using the packed schedule to help promote socio-emotional learning:
We did not approach people and say, ‘Hey, [we want to promote 21st century skills] and [then] they [promoted 21st century skills].’ We’ll do that next year. I think it’s something that we will consider: to make it more intentional and say that one of the things that we wanted to do is try to develop 21st century skills with our students. (Truman, personal communication, July 10, 2017)

The director also shared that she hoped to offer greater clarity in the upcoming summers. While holding the two-page scaffold with the five socio-emotional competencies, she explained, “I’m going to put this into the handbook for next year because I think that it’s—To see these spelled out, like this is much better way of sharing with instructors that this is what our goal is” (Rosie, personal communication, July 20, 2017).

In sum, the program administrators created a schedule intended to promote socio-emotional learning and provided resources, such as course frameworks. However, they lacked some clarity in conveying their intended goals to the rest of the summer staff. Truman, the assistant director, explained this by referencing the instructors’ autonomy to design their courses as they best saw fit:

[W]e provide this basic frame for [these classes] of what our expectations are for class. Within this frame, we give them complete flexibility to develop their class in a way to help the students increase their knowledge base and develop their social, emotional qualities. It all depends on the course. (Truman, personal communication, June 16, 2017)

However, some instructors explained that there is no follow up about how to incorporate ethical decision-making into the class framework, and they hoped for more clarity. Brooklyn described the lack of clarity about promoting socio-emotional learning as follows:

I don’t think there are any direct supports built into the program or law or regulations that as staff members [we] are required to do to help students with [socio-emotional learning]. I think some of these [socio-emotional skills] may be built in naturally to certain courses, but I think it would just be by chance. I don’t think that there’s [sic] any real [policies involved]. (Brooklyn, personal communication, July 25, 2017)
For many, like Brooklyn, the program leaders’ intention to promote socio-emotional learning through the schedule was not evidently clear. However, it is important to note that Brooklyn did recognize that efforts to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities were present in the program, although she saw these as a product of chance.

**Implementation**

The summer staff promoted socio-emotional learning opportunities through curricular and extra-curricular activities. Based on my observations and interviews, the staff members promoted all five socio-emotional skills at varied points during the summer. My post-program interview protocol asked them to provide specific examples of when they promoted each of the five competencies. Based on their descriptions, all staff promoted each of the five competencies at one point or another throughout the summer. In addition, I observed other examples of the staff promoting socio-emotional learning, though the staff did not mention these during the post-program interviews.

Before discussing how the staff implemented socio-emotional learning opportunities throughout the summer, I discuss trust. In my data analysis, I found that establishing trusting relationships were foundational to promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities. Following that, I discuss the most detailed examples that illustrate how and when staff promoted each of the five competencies through the required and permissible services. Invariably, some examples illustrate the staff’s efforts to promote several socio-emotional skills at the same time; but, I will focus my discussion on the skill that I am describing at that point. After providing the most detailed examples for each of the five competencies, I will provide examples of how the staff typically promoted socio-
emotional learning opportunities when they responded to unplanned events throughout the summer.

**Threshold issue: The importance of trust.** My analysis of the 23 pre-program and 23 post-program interviews revealed that trust provided the foundation upon which the staff members worked to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities during the summer program. For example, one of the counselors explicitly described trust as the foundation that encouraged her students to open up and share their personal lives:

> A lot of my conversations and a lot of my teaching them, it has to do with responsible decision-making, but it also has to do with relationships. . . . [T]hose that trust me..., they do come and they do tell me [about their relationships]. I think most of my conversations are towards academics, but really, if you think about it, most of it, I talk to them on how to avoid obstacles [in general], so their academic [life] is not hindered. (Cecile, personal communication, July 28, 2017)

Cecile made a connection not only between building trusting relationships with the students so that she can then help them with their socio-emotional skills, such as responsible decision-making and relationship skills. She also made a connection between theory and practice: She understood that helping students with the socio-emotional competencies would ultimately help students overcome obstacles throughout their academic trajectory.

Talin, the youngest counselor, similarly realized the importance of establishing trust first so that students could be receptive to advice in the future:

> It starts with initiating conversation. This is before you know the student. This is day one: you immediately need to interact with these students. You need to find a common ground with the students and then, eventually, they grow to communicate with you. I think one of the major, a ground-breaking achievement in a relationship is showing that you are dependable, showing that you’re reliable, showing that you’ll be there every two months or twice a month for that school visit, and that you’ll be there every Saturday. It’s important to be a solid figure instead of a transient figure. And so, just by showing up and being friendly, students will open
up to you and then, in a sense, let their guard down. (Talin, personal communication, August 2, 2017)

To build these trusting relationships, the staff members showed a genuine interest in the students. They also spent time in one-on-one conversations, a technique the residential mentors’ training covered. These approaches were part of how Talin worked to build trust:

Whether it be at breakfast, study, or at dinner, I try to make it a point to check up on our students: How are they doing academically and mentally?—make sure that they are feeling okay, they’re comfortable. Ask them if they need anything from me, and I try to do my best to provide for their needs. . . . It’s as simple as walking up to a student, whether they’re working on homework or in a conversation just checking up on students. In the cafeteria, in hallways . . . . . . [A]s you know we have a lot of new students here, and it is the first week, so a lot of students are unfamiliar with the campus as well as their peers. So, when I see a student walking around alone or walking around on the phone, and they are not really engaged with the group, I make it a point to converse with them. And just check up on how their day is. I found out that it is amazing how much a small conversation can do to one’s attitude and going forward. (Talin, personal communication, June 16, 2017)

Casual conversations that showed genuine interest in the students’ academic and personal well-being were key to gaining the students’ trust. Dollie, a residential mentor, shared an example of how she worked to forge closer relationships with the students, who felt they were not close enough and who also expressed “knowing” when relationships are forced, or not genuine:

Some students didn’t tell me but I found out that they felt I wasn’t as close to them. I was working so hard, and it really hurt me that they felt like that. I had the opportunity to go on a trip with them, and basically, I was just [with them] the whole time. I wasn’t doing it like forced, because they’re . . . young adults. [And] they know, they know [when relationships are forced]. They can sense things. They can understand things. They know when [relationships] are being forced. They said that before. (Dollie, personal communication, June 23, 2017)
After creating a genuine bond, Dollie, and other summer staff members, were able to use that trusting relationship to help the students develop their socio-emotional competencies throughout the remainder of the summer program.

**Promoting socio-emotional learning through program services and unplanned events.** All staff members promoted socio-emotional learning through the program’s mandated and permissible services and often promoted socio-emotional learning when responding to unplanned events. What follow are examples of staff efforts to promote each of the socio-emotional competencies through the mandated instructional activities and through the extra-curricular activities. After discussing the examples of how the staff promoted socio-emotional learning through the required and permissible services, I will describe several examples of how the staff promoted socio-emotional learning in response to unplanned events.

**Self-awareness.** To promote self-awareness in the classroom, the instructors helped the students identify their strengths, emotions, areas for future growth, and helped promote a “growth-mindset.” For example, Dortha, a deliberations instructor, described two instances in which she helped students become more self-aware. In the first instance, she explained that she often spent time discussing less well-known social movements, so that students would learn about less-represented historical perspectives to which students could relate. She stated:

One of the things that we talked about was representation. No representation is representation, and the idea that—we talked about this extensively—that when you’re not represented in a history book and the arts in a community, that is still saying something. You’re still being represented in some way. You’re absent. You’re silent. You’re ignored. You’re trying to be erased. (Dortha, personal communication, July 13, 2017)
Through these conversations, all her students were exposed to different historical perspectives, and minority students learned more about their own cultures, giving them food for thought about their own self-perception. For Dortha, learning about this less-reported history “is huge and for [Dortha] to be able to share that knowledge with them and for them to be like, ‘What, I had no idea, no idea,’ is really validating and empowering” (Dortha, personal communication, July 13, 2017).

In the second instance, Dortha explained her approach to helping a female student build confidence after a confrontation in class with a male student who held different views about abortion. She explained:

\[\ldots\] I really wanted her to know and understand that it’s not okay for someone to shut you down. Because it happens so often, especially by males, in so many different environments. I wanted to really validate that, “You weren’t in the wrong . . .” I said, “Maybe the way you said it, maybe could have been a little different and the tone you used.” But I really wanted her to know that it was completely okay for her to speak up and say something. I didn’t want her to walk away out of the classroom feeling like it wasn’t her right to say something or that she needed a permission from someone to say something. (Dortha, personal communication, July 13, 2017)

The residential mentors also promoted self-awareness throughout the summer by helping the students build confidence and learn to recognize their own feelings and thoughts. For example, Dollie, one of the residential mentors, explained how she helped her students become more self-aware about their daily thoughts and feelings:

[T]hey just kept coming with complaints. So I told them, as far as complaints go, you have to say two good things or two beneficial things, and then you can complain. . . . At first, it was hard. They said they can’t think of anything. . . . Or simple things, . . . they can’t [complain] without what I call two roses and a thorn. They started getting used to it, and so they started coming up and saying “I really love my teacher because she taught me this, this, and that. . . .” Then they would actually have a thought-out complaint rather than, “Oh, my feet just hurt.” Like there would be something in depth, like “I didn’t enjoy my science class today. But, I didn’t’ enjoy it because we were talking about plant health, and I don’t really understand what plant health is.” I would say, “Okay, this is where you go and talk with your teacher.
How do plants start dying? How do they get these diseases? I didn’t even know plants have diseases.” They’d come back to me the next day and say, “We went to talk with our teacher, and he gave me a website so I’m going to go check it out.” And, it created a moment when a complaint turned into something more than just a complaint.  (Dollie, personal communication, August 10, 2017)

Other residential mentors adopted similar approaches that helped students take some time to process their emotions and thoughts and become self-aware about what they experienced throughout the day.

**Self-management.** To promote self-management, the instructors validated the students’ emotions and then offered alternatives to handle these emotions or thoughts. For example, Donna shared the steps she took when a classroom discussion became contentious. She explained:

> [I gave] everyone a second to cool down and being like, “Hey, I hear you.” I think students get really startled when they face something really [different,] and I don’t fight them. They are like, “I hate this, I want to go home.” And, I’m like, “Okay, you hate being here and you want to leave.” Then, [they] very quickly de-escalate themselves. Instead of being like, “No, you’re so lucky to be here and you should be responding x, y, z way”—they don’t really want to leave. They don’t’ really hate it here. They don’t really think that their classmates are stupid. They don’t really hate each other. They just feel frustrated, and they need that to be validated and then give them a moment to just chill out for a sec. . . . So, I really shared the resources they have to regulate [themselves] in terms of feeling sleepy or feeling angry. And, one of them is just like, let’s go walk around the garden for a bit. We were right next to that one nice, green outdoor space, and I was just like “Well, just go do a lap; go get a drink. Your feelings are validated. I hear you. I think you need a second to think about this, but use the restroom or take a walk or get a drink or wash your face or something,” (Donna, personal communication, July 13, 2017)

In addition to the techniques detailed in Donna’s description, the other instructors also shared how they promoted self-management. They did so in part by helping students set goals and following up with the students on their goals.

To help the students with self-management, the residential mentors talked to the students about how to control their emotions when these ran high, setting long-term goals,
and short-term goals they could help the students monitor throughout the summer. For example, Wilda, one of the residential mentors, helped the students set and monitor short-term goals for the summer. She explained:

I would give them a note card that Friday, tell them to write down a goal that they wanted to achieve by next Friday. Then, they would turn it in to me, before they left for the weekend. . . . Monday, probably during [siesta time] or free time, I would individually find them and just talk to them: . . . “Okay, well, I read your note card and what you gave me for your goal. How are you going to achieve it? Okay, do you see anything that’s going to hinder you from achieving this goal?” They’ll tell me if [they do] and then, I’ll ask them, “Is there any help that you need to achieve this goal?” (Wilda, personal communication, August 1, 2017)

She would then work with the students throughout the week to achieve the goal, providing necessary resources. The following Friday, she would talk to the students again to determine whether the students completed their individual goals.

**Social awareness.** To promote social awareness, the instructors typically facilitated discussions or used activities that helped the students see others’ perspectives and foster empathy. For example, Wilton, a science instructor, described a classroom activity he used to advance students’ empathy and perspective-taking:

[W]e have a collective resource, [ground water,] that we were all taking from. It got the students very engaged. A lot of the students wanted to change things up in certain ways that they thought would help them succeed better. One example was, can we break the resource into pieces so that everybody has their own resource to draw from that? . . . They’re thinking, “Oh, we could solve this if we all . . . [have] our own to draw from.” I was able to stop and say, “Oh no, we can’t do that. Why can’t we do that?” It got them to think that this is a resource that if it’s shared, then you can’t partition it. In this example, it is ground water. You can’t put walls up to separate ground water from other people. . . . Then they said, “Because you can’t block off the ground water.” I said, “Yes, so are there other solutions that you can come up with?” They ended up making a cabal syndicate or something. Some group of them decided that they would have rules over how they were exploiting the resource so that at least they would not exploit the resource so fast. Then, we revisited that at the very end of the class. We had a debrief and talked about what the solutions are to this classic problem, the tragedy of the commons. (Wilton, personal communication, July 17, 2017)
Similarly, Franklin, a deliberations instructor, promoted social awareness through class discussion. In one example, he facilitated a discussion on race and class. He explained how he managed group dynamics:

We discussed issues of race and class, which are difficult. . . . But there were times when some people who did have the minority opinion here, they would still speak out, and then I had to make sure discussions stayed fair and balanced or nuanced. . . . The first thing is that high schoolers, as opposed to the college students, they are much more likely to speak and not raise hands . . . So, they were more constantly interrupted. So that was the right time when I had to say, not discipline, but say, “Student name, you need to let this person finish what he/she wants to say.” So that’s the biggest thing is, to me, is making sure that they are able to say what they say and then explain themselves. . . . Then we can have feedback and discuss. But as long as people get to say what they want in the first place, I think that’s important. It’s what I try to do. (Franklin, personal communication, July 17, 2017)

Among the instructors, it was also not uncommon to use the book assigned for the summer, There Are No Children Here, to begin and facilitate discussions on social issues. According to the staff, There Are No Children Here discussed crime, murders, poverty, and race, among other themes.

Staff members also often promoted social awareness during extra-curricular activities and unstructured time. For example, some of the residential mentors took it upon themselves to promote empathy. For Bobby, promoting empathy was a personal goal. He explained how he tried to promote empathy during the unstructured free time:

I tried to teach them empathy. That was a big one. I saw that [if] all of a sudden you can be [receptive to others’] point of view and how others think and how they feel, it’s a huge thing. And [seeing different perspectives] would quite nearly change [the students’] lives and how they see people, and how they treat people, and exploring their relations with people for that matter. (Bobby, personal communication, July 24, 2017)

Free time and meal times were the most common unstructured times when the residential mentors engaged in one-on-one conversations with the students to further the students’ social awareness.
**Relationship skills.** One typical way the instructors helped students improve relationship skills was by using activities in which students worked in pairs or groups. For example, Brooklyn, a chemistry instructor, shared a collaborative problem-solving activity from her class:

There was one activity we did, it's called the Martian periodic table. . . . The students get a bunch of clues, and they have to try to figure out how to put all these made-up elements onto this made-up periodic table. And the idea is that, the relationships on this made-up [periodic table] are the same relationships that exist on the real periodic table, so the students can understand the relationships and not focus on surface level information. I had [the students] working in groups to figure this out. It was kind of like a puzzle, and they had to figure it out together. (Brooklyn, personal communication, July 25, 2017)

The instructors also promoted relationship skills through the deliberations class framework. The students chose a debate topic and the instructors separated the students into three teams that represented one of three sides of the debate: for, against, and neutral. The students worked with their group members throughout the summer and in the process engaged socially, built relationships, and helped the students learn to communicate clearly with one another. At the end of the summer program, each deliberations class presented their class debate to everyone in the program. Instances where instructors promoted relationships skills via group work were fairly common throughout the summer.

The residential mentors also often led activities that promoted relationship skills. The residential mentors often started their residential mentors seminars with ice-breakers so that students could learn about each other. For example, Lucy shared how she helped students communicate with one another, especially when students were shy:

We had, residential mentor-led ice breakers a lot through the first and second week, [which] helped at least with the branching out kind of thing, directing conversation more towards the quieter kids. It wasn't anything that was like, “I’m setting up this activity specifically for her.” But it was like, we’re all in this together, maybe if I direct the conversation towards something she’d be interested in, she’ll talk more,
and everyone else will talk about that. So, [the ice breakers] center[ed] around someone who normally isn’t interested [in branching out]. (Lucy, personal communication, July 27, 2017)

In this example, Lucy helped the students make connections with one another, using ice breakers to help shy students communicate with others. Many of the residential mentors described similar experiences to Lucy. For example, the residential mentors shared how they worked with other residential mentors and with the students when participating in team activities such as the UB Olympics and the outdoors challenge.

**Responsible decision-making.** To promote responsible decision-making, the instructors offered the students opportunities to make their own choices with the instructors’ assistance. For example, Rae, a deliberations and capstone project instructor, discussed a class period in which she first provided an opportunity for students to make responsible decisions and then supported them along the way:

I said, “You need five scholarly references and five references from another—pretty much other resources for it.” … That Wednesday they—because they were off that Thursday and Friday—they needed to submit before they left. I said, “This has to be done.” I just—I sat there. [laughs] And, they all did it. Everybody submitted their ten annotated references. Everybody. They made good decisions about getting it done, asking each other for help, asking me for help. I went around to each of them and they’re like, “I did this one. Does this sound all right?” I would sit with them and we would correct little grammar issues … . [The students are] not perfect, but they all did it. I was really proud of them. (Rae, personal communication, July 14, 2017)

Other ways of promoting responsible decision-making in the classroom also included instructors treating students as if they were in college. For example, instructors gave the students unstructured class time to work on their research projects if the students chose to, and they helped the students along during this unstructured time.

The residential mentors likewise found opportunities throughout the summer to promote responsible decision-making. Similar to the instructors, the residential mentors
gave the students periods of time in which to make responsible decisions. For example,

Bernard, a residential mentor, described an opportunity in which students could practice responsible decision-making while on an out-of-town trip:

[D]uring the New York trip, when the bus tour got canceled, the [residential mentors] had to take the students around downtown, probably not downtown, Times Square, which is, oh, my God. What me and [another residential mentor] did, we decided that instead of looking for these kids, through these four stores, we decided that it’ll be best to put them in groups of three. It’s like one person to be in charge of everybody else. And that kind of just made them responsible for each other. We gave them a slight time to be in there like 20 to 30 minutes and they had to be outside at that time. . . . It went well. (Bernard, personal communication, July 28, 2017)

Several other residential mentors also referenced the New York trip as an instance that allowed students to make responsible decisions. The residential mentors also mentioned giving the students the autonomy and opportunity to responsibly choose what activities the students wanted to perform for the talent show.

**Unplanned events.** The staff often took the opportunity to promote socio-emotional learning when unexpected issues arose during the curricular activities. For example, consider how the staff approached a situation where a student fell asleep in class.⁶ Holden, the longest-serving counselor in the program, explained the situation and the steps the administrators took in response. Holden explained how they planned to work with the student to foster his relationship skills:

We just had a situation today where we found out a kid’s having a hard time in a class. He fell asleep in class, and the teacher made him stand for 20 minutes . . . . They’ve been having a conflict. Instead of just moving him out of the class, we’re going to talk to him about how do you go to a teacher and ask or let them know that you’re not doing well, or that you’re having a conflict with them. So, walking him through the whole process without him just getting switched to another class, which was our first reaction. Then, we thought about it. We thought, no. We talk a lot amongst the staff on how to do things with the students. Like, I said, our first thing

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⁶ The instructor for the class did not participate in this study.
was, “Let’s move him out of there.” Then we thought about it and we said, “No, that’s not real life. That’s really not going to help him. He needs to go to the teacher and talk to the teacher but in order to do that, we need to talk to him and show him, talk to him about how to do that.” (Holden, personal communication, June 16, 2017)

In follow-up conversations, Holden shared that the administrators had the conversation with the student, and the that the student was then able communicate his concerns to the teacher in a way that lessened future conflict. His ability to communicate in a seemingly effective manner with his teacher suggests the student may have improved his interpersonal communication skills after his discussion with the administrators. The example also illustrates what I observed when sitting in on team daily meetings: the administrators often took a collaborative approach to address student issues and made fostering socio-emotional skills a prime focus when responding to the issues.

Likewise, the staff worked in teams to foster socio-emotional learning and address unplanned events that occurred during the extra-curricular activities. Two unexpected events illustrate the staff members’ approach to similar events. In the first event, two White females and two Latino male students had a dispute about the volume at which the male students played cultural music.

The administrators addressed the situation with the students involved and took the opportunity to also promote social awareness for all students in the academy. One of the residential mentors, who had outside training in facilitating difficult dialogues, facilitated a discussion amongst the students involved. He explained how he handled the discussion:

I had to have a conversation with those students that involved race and gender to talk about what they feel happened, why, and ... what they said, and how could they [have] reacted to it. We discovered that ... it went deeper than race. ... [The male students] involved are wondering why didn’t [the female students involved] go to them directly, when they were complaining about it? And, why did they go to higher administration and try to get them in trouble? What they didn’t understand was that as women, [the females involved] were saying, it’s hard to be confrontational
because men may can become intimidating, and they felt like it’s just a little bit easier to just go to staff. [There was a d]ecent amount of misunderstanding with that but it was all out on the table. So I had to help—I actually chose—I wanted to have that conversation. . . . It helped in the sense of, they might not be friends, but everything’s out on the table. I guess there is not as much passive aggressiveness. People know what’s happening. Honestly, people apologized to each other. Although emotions were still running high, there was some sense of understanding of what was going on. (Wilber, personal communication, July 25, 2017)

To promote social awareness at large, the residential coordinator held a student session where he asked all students to write down some of the most painful things they had heard in the program. All responses were anonymous. After this, he gave each student a paper-heart and asked the students to fold the heart every time they heard something that hurt them as he read the anonymous responses. At the end, he asked everyone to hold their paper hearts up so that everyone could see how crumbled the hearts were. He then proceeded to discuss the importance of appreciating diversity, respecting differences, and watching their words all the time. The director shared that the experience was likely cathartic for the students.

In the second event, the administrators learned that one of the students, who was questioning his sexuality, had made several comments to his roommate. Feeling uncomfortable and unsure about how to handle the situation, the roommate reached out to the administrators. The administrators handled this second event similarly, as a team. The director explained how she and the head counselor handled the discussion with the student. The director explained in detail:

It’s trying to have conversations with each of them individually to make an—and the student was uncomfortable because the other student was coming on to him. That’s not something we want to happen either, trying to find a way to separate them, put them in separate rooms for the duration of the program so that neither of them feel badly about it. . . . [The head counselor] and I were both in a room having a conversation with [the student who was questioning his sexual orientation] about how would he feel if we separated the two, because really it was obviously making
each of them stressed out. We spoke with him and then we spoke with the other young man, trying to mitigate it . . . . It was a lot of back and forth, a lot of small conversations. Actually, in one of the dorm rooms, it had a spot where we could sit quietly and talk to each other. [We continued] checking in to make sure both of them are comfortable with the situation and that they still were friends . . . .” (Rosie, personal communication, July 20, 2017)

The students did remain friends even after the incident. The staff also took the opportunity to teach all UB summer program students about sexual orientation and gender identity. The assistant director shared that they had a panel who spoke to the students about sexual orientation and gender identity to raise awareness. When unplanned events occurred, the staff not only addressed the situation individually with the students involved but also took the opportunity to promote socio-emotional learning with all students.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I begin with a brief summary of my results. I then discuss my findings through the lens of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory. Through this theoretical lens, I identify the gaps in the different ecological systems in the implementation of socio-emotional learning. Then, I use Cohen and Moffit’s (2009) theory of the dilemma of policy and practice, namely the concept of capability, to further understand how the program promotes socio-emotional learning in spite of gaps in the different ecological systems. The concept of capability is also a useful tool to identify potential areas of improvement to promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities. I close this chapter with future research, policy, and implementation considerations.

Results: Partially Articulated Understandings and Fuller Enacted Understanding

The results of this case study showed two main findings in response to my two research questions. The first question this dissertation seeks to answer is, “How do the Upward Bound (UB) summer staff conceptualize socio-emotional skills?” My analysis now shows that the staff articulated a partial understanding of what socio-emotional skills are. They focused on relationship skills and rarely emphasized responsible decision-making. That is, the staff generally understood socio-emotional skills to be the ability for someone to forge and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships with others. The least referenced skill was responsible decision-making, or the ability to evaluate a situation, problem, and consequences and make ethical decisions based on the evaluation.

Several subtle differences among the three groups of interviewees are noteworthy. The instructors showed a more comprehensive understanding when conceptualizing socio-emotional skills than did the administrators and the residential mentors. As a group, the
instructors’ understanding spanned the gamut of socio-emotional skills. The administrators focused on descriptions of social-awareness and relationship skills and made no references to self-awareness. The residential mentors focused on relationship skills and made no references to social-awareness in their descriptions of socio-emotional skills. The differences among the groups may be attributed to several factors, including the instructors’ prior training outside the program on emotional intelligence and the residential mentors lack of work experience.

The second research question asked “How does the UB staff promote socio-emotional learning throughout the summer?” My analysis now shows that the staff promoted socio-emotional learning opportunities through three components. First, the summer program’s leaders held an explicit goal to promote socio-emotional learning in the program. Second, the summer program administrators created a blueprint of components to implement their socio-emotional learning goals. This blueprint included hiring staff members who had characteristics that would potentially promote socio-emotional learning: diversity, relevant experience, and shared vision to promote socio-emotional skills. Third, in the implementation, the summer staff promoted socio-emotional learning through staff-student interactions. Additionally, in the implementation, the staff often fostered socio-emotional learning when responding to unplanned events.

**Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Theory**

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory is a helpful tool in understanding human development through the complex interaction of proximal and distal systems in relation to the developing child. What follows next are tenets of the theory in relation to my findings.
The Proximal Environment: Staff-Student Interactions

The findings presented in Chapter Four illustrate that, the quality of the staff-student interactions was largely conducive to the students’ developing their socio-emotional skills. Among their conducive approaches that enhanced the quality of the staff-student interactions, the staff made efforts to spend time getting to know the students academically and socially; to promote better interpersonal communication; to teach students about better decision-making; and to help students take perspective and see other points of view. It is true that I did not measure changes in students’ socio-emotional skills stemming from the summer program. But, the analysis of the data presented in Chapter Four shows that the staff consistently took efforts to help the students learn socio-emotional skills whenever possible during curricular and extra-curricular activities and when responding to unplanned events. The quality of staff-student interactions in curricular and extra-curricular activities helped answer my second question on how the UB staff takes efforts to promote socio-emotional learning during the summer program.

Staff’s Personal Characteristics: An Area of Strength that Might be Further Strengthened

The staff members exhibited strengths in personal characteristics that likely helped them promote socio-emotional learning opportunities during the six weeks. These strengths include socio-emotional competence, values, interests, and dispositions, which I discuss below.

Socio-emotional competence. First, the staff members exhibited socio-emotional competence. Two sources of data were most telling about the staff’s socio-emotional competence: the interviews and observations. During the interviews the staff members
described their stress levels and potential frustrations, which provided me with insights into the staff members self-regulation skills. Most expressed low levels of stress. For those who expressed stress, the stress was often related to feeling overwhelmed with the demands of the schedule and with lack of clarity on their roles. However, as the summer progressed, the staff who expressed feeling stressed reported lower levels of stress. Similarly, their frustrations diminished, though the frustrations that remained related to the lack of clarity or consistency. Finally, some of the staff members expressed having prior training on socio-emotional skills, such as in self-motivation, emotional intelligence, and helping students with traumatic experiences learn. During my fieldwork, I observed how the staff exhibited self-management, social awareness, made responsible decisions, and forged positive relationships with the students. However, I did not measure how the staff's socio-emotional skills influenced socio-emotional learning; I focused only on the staff's efforts to promote socio-emotional learning. Further studies can look at the effects of promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities.

**Values, interests, and dispositions.** Second, the staff members demonstrated other characteristics, such as values, interests, and dispositions (see Cohen & Moffitt, 2009), that enhanced interactions between the staff and students and thereby promoted socio-emotional learning. These characteristics were evident in the staff's ability to forge positive relationships with the students. The staff described their relationships with the students as positive, and my observations confirmed their descriptions. The characteristics were also evident in the staff's ability to model socio-emotional skills. For example, when Dollie, a residential mentor, carefully listened to one of her students voice her discontent
with her, Dollie modeled self-regulation and interpersonal communication skills by remaining calm throughout the interaction.

**Gaps in training**. Although the staff exhibited personal characteristics helpful in promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities, their skills could have been improved through training. Their partial knowledge on socio-emotional skills and on how to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities can be attributed in part to lack of clarity during training and the amount of training provided. Based on my observations, all the summer staff trainings sought to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities. But based on the interviews, most of the staff members were unclear about what socio-emotional skills the trainings promoted or whether the trainings promoted socio-emotional skills at all. Moreover, some of the staff members who identified socio-emotional skills discussed during the trainings remained unsure about how to translate the information into action. For example, the instructors who attended the trainings explained that the trainings on how to promote socio-emotional learning could have been made stronger by providing specific steps as to how to weave in responsible decision-making into the class activities. In contrast to the instructors, the residential mentors’ week-long mandatory training included ice-breakers as examples of how to promote relationship skills and provided the residential mentors with a handbook that outlined different activities to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities.

Similarly, the amount of training was uneven. The administrators did not receive any training for the summer. Some of the counselors explained that none of the summer trainings involved learning about socio-emotional skills, although they sometimes did get such training during the academic year. The instructors could attend any of the four
optional trainings. Many did not. And, the residential mentors were the only summer staff required to attend training and did so for a full week.

My analysis of the data suggests that training may make a difference in helping the UB Program staff members promote socio-emotional learning opportunities. To illustrate, the residential mentors, who received the most training and arguably had the least experience before the summer program, often drew on their knowledge about relationships skills to inform their interactions with the students. Relationships skills were the main focus of their summer training. Of course, it is entirely possible that the residential mentors had knowledge of relationships skills prior to joining the program, but their descriptions about what they learned during training and how they implemented this knowledge suggests that the training enhanced whatever understanding they possessed before the program.

**Contextual Factors: From the UB Program Setting to the Federal Policy**

The UB summer program created an environment conducive to fostering socio-emotional learning opportunities. Two features were salient to fostering this environment: the role of the residential mentors as a pseudo family and the positive staff-staff interactions during the six-week period. At the most distal level, the federal policy provided enough discretion to the staff to foster socio-emotional learning opportunities even if the policy did not mandate the fostering of socio-emotional learning opportunities.

**The pseudo family.** At the start of this study, I planned to examine the interaction between the summer program staff and the students’ families. After interviewing the participants and making observations, I changed my original assumption about staff-family interactions. Initially, I thought the lack of such interactions would be a significant
challenge in the staff’s ability to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities within the summer program context. In this summer program, the staff engaged the families minimally. However, I found that the summer program created a pseudo family that substituted for the minimal staff engagement with students’ actual families. I first describe the lack of family engagement. Then, I describe the role that the staff played in substituting for the students’ families during the summer program.

The relationship between the summer program staff and the family was attenuated, and in some cases non-existent. The staff briefly mentioned family three times. First, the director mentioned that the program sent a one-page pamphlet home every week to let the families know what their children had learned throughout the week. Second, the counselors also discussed contacting the families for logistical purposes. They called the family members before the beginning of the program to go over the date and time when the student would be leaving home to head to the program and to ensure the student had all the medication they would need during the summer program. Third, the administrators contacted the parents when serious student discipline issues occurred. In sum, family engagement was very limited throughout the summer.

The director explained the limited role of the families during the summer in terms of balancing program components. She said:

[C]ertainly, we recognize that the more we communicate with parents the more buy-in they have. It’s just finding that balance between the services we’re supposed to be providing under the grant and things that are also supporting the students but are the next layer. And if we can’t get done with the first layer, getting to the second layer is a challenge. (Rosie, personal communication, June 15, 2017)

Family engagement is not a requirement under the federal policy. In this sense, family engagement is only a permissible service. Although the director recognized the
potential benefits of family engagement in the program, time constraints in a six-week program that aimed to further academic and socio-emotional skills frustrated the director’s ability to emphasize family engagement.

During the weekdays of the six-week UB summer program, the residential staff, with the support of the administrators replaced the role that the students’ family traditionally played when the students were at home. I am not arguing that the summer staff mirrored the family structure that the students had at home. Rather, I am suggesting that the staff members became the primary caregivers of the students during the summer program. In essence, they provided for the students’ needs, including emotional and safety needs, because the students’ families were absent from the program and the students resided on campus with the summer staff.

The staff’s role as a pseudo family helped strengthen socio-emotional learning opportunities in at least two ways. First, the residential mentors helped maintain consistency in learning socio-emotional skills beyond the classroom. This continuity is important, because socio-emotional learning is most effective when it extends from the school to the home (Albright & Weissberg, 2010; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2007). In this case, socio-emotional learning opportunities extended from the classroom to the residence halls and dining hall, and other places where the staff often interacted with the students. For example, the instructors promoted socio-emotional learning opportunities through student collaboration, while the residential mentors used siesta time to help students set weekly goals.

Second, the program supported some of the positive interactions that strengthen socio-emotional learning beyond the classroom (see Albright et al., 2011). For example, the
administrators kept the residential mentors abreast of their individual student group members’ progress and whether the students were not doing well and might need additional help. They also shared the program policies and practices with the residential mentors. Sharing the information with the residential mentors was likely attributed to the residential mentors’ role as summer staff members. However, sharing the information gave the residential staff a better understanding of the academic practices of the program and the program restrictions.

**Staff-staff interactions.** The staff-staff interactions were positive. Even so, staff interactions might be further strengthened. Hiring and training as discussed in the summer program blueprint supported staff-staff interactions. I describe below how each of these components of the blueprint may have contributed to the staff efforts to foster socio-emotional learning opportunities. I also identify the gaps in these components.

**Hiring.** The administrators’ intentionally hired staff who could promote socio-emotional learning. The staff shared the administrators’ goal to promote socio-emotional learning, but generally the staff did not voice these goals to other staff members. In addition, as a whole, the staff did not work explicitly toward the same socio-emotional goals. Nevertheless, regardless of these gaps, the staff shared the program leaders’ goal and vision to help the students with skills beyond academics.

**Trainings.** The trainings offered opportunities for staff to learn about and work with each other, but gaps remained in the staff-staff relationships. For instructors, the collaboration during training happened in the training activities. I observed the instructors interacting with each other and working in pairs to create a list of classroom activities that would
potentially help students with self-motivation. I also observed the residential mentors working in teams, such as ice-breakers that took place during trainings.

However, staff-staff relationships generally waned over time. To illustrate, the instructors largely worked alone and maintained minimal contact with the other staff members, including other instructors. The residential mentors spent relatively more time with each other. However, two residential mentors reported there was segregation along racial and ethnic lines. Wilber, a residential mentor, described the situation as follows: “I’m still trying to figure out the dynamics because it seems like as much as we do mix well, there’s still the couple of Black [residential mentors], the couple of Hispanic [residential mentors], and the couple of White [residential mentors]” (Wilber, personal communication, June 22, 2017). He went on to explain that he wasn’t sure whether this was just a product of people who shared similar interests bonding together or an issue of race. He said he would continue to observe the situation to better understand it.

In this study, it is not clear whether reduced staff-staff interaction negatively affected the staff’s efforts to foster socio-emotional learning. What is clearer is that the close staff-staff relationships that can contribute to a socio-emotional learning-focused climate (Durlak et al., 2011) could have been strengthened.

**UB program policies.** The federal policy does not mandate promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities during the summer but provides the staff members sufficient discretion to do so. As described in the governing regulations and policies section of Chapter Two, the goal of the program was to prepare the students for secondary and postsecondary education. The regulations draw attention to the importance of providing academic services that will help the students in secondary school and will potentially
prepare them for the rigor of college. The permissible services allow for socio-emotional learning. For example, the program can expose students to cultural events and other activities unavailable to disadvantaged youth. What the UB Program in this case study did is noteworthy. The staff members found ways to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities through the required and permissible services. This case study shows that it is possible to both meet the requirements and promote socio-emotional learning at the same time.

The lack of focus on socio-emotional learning in the federal regulations merits revisiting. A growing body of research links socio-emotional competence to higher likelihood of academic success (e.g., Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Heckman et al., 2006; Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001). In other words, academic success is not simply a product of subject-content knowledge. Thus, content-knowledge emphasized in the UB summer program is only part of the solution to help students achieve academic success as the program hopes to do. Socio-emotional competence is another component of the solution. Thus, it makes sense to attend to promoting socio-emotional learning alongside academic skills. The current regulations fail to capture the importance of socio-emotional learning.

The Influence of Time Across Proximal and Distal Levels

According to the bioecological theory, high-quality interactions that take place in a consistent fashion across a period of time are most helpful to a person’s development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In this study, consistency in promoting socio-emotional learning during the six-week program was an area of strength.

The ability to promote socio-emotional learning in an ongoing way may be attributed to the summer schedule, which sought to promote socio-emotional learning in
both required and permissible services. This schedule translated into daily exposure to socio-emotional learning throughout the six weeks of the program.

The regularity with which the staff promoted socio-emotional learning can also be attributed to the staff’s self-motivation to promote socio-emotional learning even during unstructured free time and meal time. For example, Dollie, a residential mentor used the *siesta* time to talk to her student group members about their weekly goals and about how she could help them achieve these goals. She was not required to do so, but her objective to help the students with goal-setting and completing goals kept her motivated to seek the students and take advantage of the unstructured time. In the end, the schedule and staff’s self-motivation contributed to consistent socio-emotional learning throughout the six weeks of the summer program.

Finally, the regularity with which the staff fostered socio-emotional learning partly reflects the staff members’ decision to respond to unplanned events by promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities. For example, when responding to a student’s sexual orientation and mental health concerns, the staff both assisted the student in finding the mental health supports he needed and added a panel talk on sexual orientation and gender identity to the summer schedule. This talk gave all students an opportunity to become more self-aware and socially aware about sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Capability in Policy Implementation**

One way to approach understanding the staff’s ability to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities during the six-week summer program regardless of the gaps in their efforts is through the concept of capability. The program’s strengths in capability included the staff sharing similar values, interests, and dispositions. These helped the staff promote
socio-emotional learning regularly throughout the summer. Among areas that might be strengthened is the lack of knowledge and clarity regarding socio-emotional skills and learning, and the communication of socio-emotional learning as a goal. What follows is a discussion of the capabilities that the summer staff and social environment brought to policy.

**Individuals’ Sources of Capabilities**

**Values.** Values influence implementation, because “policy aims or instruments can attract or offend practitioners’ values or those of others in the environment” (Cohen and Moffitt, 2009, p. 35). Values influence implementation by reinforcing or weakening the implementers' will to implement the policy.

The UB Program policy aims to provide disadvantaged youth with services otherwise not available to achieve success in secondary and postsecondary education. It attracted summer staff who shared this similar aim and similar values. The administrators made socio-emotional learning a component of the mandatory and optional training. The summer staff brought their values to bear on implementation. The staff not only helped the students academically but also set personal goals to promote socio-emotional learning without further prompting from the program administrators.

**Interests.** Similarly, interests can influence the will to implement. A policy that furthers an implementers’ interests enhances the implementers’ will. In contrast, a policy that negatively affects someone’s interests will dissuade the implementers to act and implement the policy. In the UB summer program, several interests were at stake and influenced implementation. First, the administrators had an interest in preserving their jobs, which influences their will to implement the policy requirements. The program is
grant-funded, and the permanent staff depends on funding every five-year grant cycle. To increase the chances of retaining funding and employment, the administrators must comply with the required services of the program. Their will to implement the required services is evident in the schedule they created, which devoted much of the attention to the academic component relative to the program’s goal to promote socio-emotional learning.

Second, all staff members, including the administrators, shared a personal interest in helping the students succeed at an individual and social level. The administrators added numerous extra-curricular activities to the summer schedule in hopes of promoting socio-emotional learning. The summer staff also promoted socio-emotional learning opportunities when responding to unplanned events. Finally, the staff’s shared interest to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities was apparent in their efforts to build trusting relationships with the students through which they could help the students improve personally and socially, even when the program administrators had not voiced their goals to do so.

**Skill and knowledge.** According to Cohen and Moffitt (2009), implementers use their knowledge to achieve policy aims, and inadequate knowledge can undermine the practitioners’ ability to achieve the aims. The summer staff’s skills and knowledge about socio-emotional learning were lacking in some ways. The differences in skills and knowledge may be partially attributed to the uneven training for the summer staff. For example, the residential mentors joined the program with little prior experience. They were typically young college students. To bolster their skills and knowledge, the administrators required that residential mentors train for a full week from 9:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. While the training was not dedicated to learning about socio-emotional skills, the
it included socio-emotional learning components, such as relationship skills. The inclusion of these components exposed the residential mentors to skills and knowledge.

In contrast, the administrators did not require that the other summer staff attend the training sessions, with the exception of completing the online training modules. Some chose to attend, while others did not. The instructors who did attend at least one of the trainings expressed ambiguity as to what instructors were supposed to do in the classroom, especially as to how to assist students with socio-emotional skills, such as self-motivation. Some called the training insufficient, lacking specifics as to how to integrate socio-emotional learning opportunities. Regardless of uneven training, the summer staff worked to implement the policy goals. Their ability to do so was likely partially informed by the other individual capabilities they brought to the implementation, including values, interests, and their dispositions.

**Dispositions.** Dispositions are “defined as one’s personal qualities or characteristics including, beliefs, interests, values and coping style; determiners of behavior, constellations or personal meanings from which behaviors spring” (Weiner & Cohen, 2003, p. 1). Disposition also influence implementers’ will to implement the policies, motivation to learn knowledge that will help in their job, and engagement in implementation (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009).

While all staff exhibited awareness and strengths in their own socio-emotional competence, they approached the students in varied ways that reflected their dispositions. Some were energetic, created group cheers, and often asked for group hugs. These staff members verbalized their group pride. Other staff reported being more reserved and purposely sought to make close connections with each individual student. Despite the
differences in personal characteristics and approaches, all staff members promoted socio-emotional learning opportunities throughout the summer. They all shared a will to implement the policies—likely a result of the administrators’ approach to hiring.

Moreover, the staff participating in the study expressed a motivation to learn. The residential mentors participated in the summer training, articulated what they had learned in the training, and used strategies learned during training. The instructors also had motivation to learn, evidenced by their attendance in at least one of the optional trainings and their desire to see more relevant training for them.

Social Sources of Capabilities

Organizations and environments give rise to the social sources of capabilities as well (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). In other words, the social environment and a program’s organization can bring or lack resources that help implementation. For example, organizations can bring resources that help achieve the intended aims and goals. Fewer resources can lead to higher turn-over in organizations and hamper the development of stable knowledge in the organization (Plunkett, 1991).

A high turn-over rate was present in the summer program. The high turn-over rate might be partially attributed to the uneven training and lack of clarity. It could be due to low pay and its status, especially for residential mentors, as a first, temporary job. For such reasons, and perhaps others, the summer staff lacked consistency across the years. This means that the administrators had to train the new summer staff, including the residential coordinator who oversaw and helped train the residential mentors every summer. The knowledge acquired through experience and training the prior summer was lost by the following summer. Some staff had worked with the program before and had the desire and
ability to return the next summer, including four of the instructors who participated in this study. Others would like to return, but because they are students themselves, they may be graduating and leaving town or seeking other work experiences.

The organization and environment, both social sources of capability, can enhance capability by facilitating the dissemination of knowledge, values, and interests that inform practice in an organization (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). The slow dissemination of information can also weaken capability (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). The UB summer program hired approximately 60 summer staff members and grouped some of the staff in a way that enhanced capability. All residential mentors had daily residential evening meetings where everyone learned about what happened during the day and how they should address similar situations going forward. The residential mentors maintained close communication through this structure.

In contrast, the instructors were largely on their own but could approach the administrators if they had any questions. The administrators described this as an open-door policy. That is, the door would always be open for any instructor to come and talk to the administrators about any issues. Some instructors came by, but most did not. Some asked for clarification about what they should be doing in general and with regard to further socio-emotional learning opportunities in particular. Others did not ask and instead waited to receive further information. This uneven flow of information and lack of clarity influenced their capabilities to perform—if only for temporary periods throughout the summer.
Future Considerations

Research Considerations

The aim of this study was to learn about whether and how a secondary compensatory education residential summer program promoted socio-emotional learning opportunities. While this study is helpful in determining that the Upward Bound (UB) Program in this case study does strive to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities, more studies are needed to understand whether and how other summer programs do so.

In addition, for the program in this case study and others, it is important to ascertain whether the program is actually effective in promoting socio-emotional learning. In other words, the current study shows that the program promotes socio-emotional learning opportunities. It does not illuminate whether the students’ socio-emotional competencies are improved. This lingering question may be investigated by studying the students’ competencies prior to the summer program and after the program or by comparing the socio-emotional competence of students who do not attend the summer program and otherwise similar students who do. A related area of research is to look at how other UB Programs implement socio-emotional learning, taking into account the discretion that each program has to work on permissible services.

At the policy implementation level, more research is needed to understand what successful capability-building looks like in UB residential programs that seek to promote socio-emotional learning. The program staff has great discretion in deciding what training to include to improve knowledge and skills and to create linkages across the organization to facilitate easy access to information, knowledge and skills, values, interests regarding
practice. Programs across the nation will inevitably vary. They are unified by the policy’s requirements but have discretion within the policy.

The role of diversity is an important topic for future research. To promote social awareness, the program purposely sought diverse summer staff that was reflective of the student body. I was not studying diversity in the program but saw that the staff’s diversity was aimed in part at promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities. However, the staff also reported difficulty and lack of clarity on how to address racial tensions between the students when those occurred, a potential issue of capability. At the end of the program, such tension remained an issue. Moving forward, research is needed to understand the role of diversity in compensatory education residential programs and how to potentially increase capability to address social awareness issues that arise.

At the federal level, the program policy is both vague and strict in its requirements. The tension and distance between the policy and the implementation is what Cohen and Moffitt (2009) would describe as part of the dilemma in implementing the program policy. It might be helpful to investigate what the implementers understand about the language of the policy aims. For example, how do they interpret the policy’s aim to promote success in secondary and postsecondary education? Promoting success means different things to different programs. For some programs, this might simply mean helping students academically, while for others, such as the UB Program in this case study, it means developing socio-emotional competence as well. This vagueness can truncate implementation. For example, in programs that see promoting success as building socio-emotional competence, implementation may be more difficult, because these programs
may use both the required and many permissible services to assist the students in developing socio-emotional skills and thereby potentially strain the program staff.

**Policy Considerations**

Two policy considerations are worth discussing. First, at the federal level, the U.S. Department of Education should revisit the current list of Upward Bound’s required and permissible services and amend it to require to include socio-emotional learning. The growing literature on the importance of socio-emotional competence in relation to academic success suggests that including socio-emotional learning as part of the required services would improve students’ ability to succeed in secondary and post-secondary schools (See, e.g., Belfield et al., 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Hawkins et al., 2008).

This case study shows that promoting socio-emotional learning while also achieving academic goals is feasible, though challenging given the current vague language of the policy. The way that this UB Program approaches promoting socio-emotional learning opportunities is largely guided by the layers of program priorities that the director discussed. At the first layer, the program administrators set out to ensure that they provided the required services and followed the required regulatory organization. At the second layer, the program administrators tried to provide as many permissible services as possible. Some of the challenges in doing so reflect the short amount of time the program has to dedicate to permissible services given that they must attend to the required services. I recognize that a change in policy language will inevitably lead to challenges at the implementation level, as Cohen and Moffitt (2009) have highlighted. Specifically, the implementers might not have the capability to promote socio-emotional learning
opportunities without more guidance. However, this drawback in turn underscores the importance of capability-building at the ground level.

Second, to build capability, program administrators can implement several options. One approach is to improve the program policies to provide greater clarity. Using this case study as an example, the program can build upon and revise its program “open door” policy and add more formal check-ins with the instructors. Another option is to adopt more even training across all groups, including in the length and content of training. Improved training can build capability regarding socio-emotional skills. To illustrate, staff members readily made connections between the socio-emotional learning opportunities they provided and socio-emotional skills when they could refer to the two-page scaffold during the post-program interviews. The scaffold was minimal but may have helped the staff members recognize and reflect on socio-emotional skills. More nuanced training may lead to greater capability to advance students’ socio-emotional skills.

Alongside these modest recommended changes, capability may be strengthened by reducing staff turnover. To do this, this UB Program and other residential programs like it, might seek to recruit staff from nearby school districts. Such potential staff are likely to be less transient and potentially very experienced in working with the population of students that the UB Program seeks to serve.
CONCLUSION

I began this study with three purposes in mind, as described in Maxwell (2005): intellectual, practical, and personal. Intellectually, I wanted to understand whether and how postsecondary compensatory education programs, such as Upward Bound (UB), might promote socio-emotional learning. In an effort to understand the UB Program further, I dug into the literature and learned that much of the relevant research focused on understanding the program's influence on academic achievement. This focus is not misguided, but it can be expanded. If the purpose of the program is to help participating students succeed in secondary and postsecondary education, then it makes sense that many of the research studies have explored whether the program is in fact helping students succeed in secondary and postsecondary education. In essence, much of the research has focused more on measuring the academic outcomes and less on the process of helping students develop the necessary skills to achieve or improve the academic outcomes. The link between socio-emotional skills and academic achievement is increasingly garnering attention in the education field and this study contributes to that body of literature. In this study, I focused on the program process to help the students gain the necessary socio-emotional skills to succeed in secondary and postsecondary education.

However, it is important to note that improving students' socio-emotional skills matters not only because socio-emotional skills help students close the academic achievement gap. The gains go further. Socio-emotional skills, such as the ability to collaborate with others and understand cultural differences, serve the students well once they join the workforce and in their social interactions in general. As Heckman explained, “. . . much more than smarts is required for success in life. Motivation, sociability (the ability
to work with others), the ability to focus on tasks, self-regulation, self-esteem, time preference, health and mental health all matter” (Heckman, 2008, p. 10).

I had worked with a UB Program for approximately two years before I began the study; my experience informed my assumptions about potential efforts to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities in UB Programs. My time as a UB Program staff member helped me see streaks of potential staff efforts to foster socio-emotional skills happening throughout the year and summer. However, I did not attribute the efforts to any intentional program components. I began the study with the assumption that the UB staff in this case study was likely not promoting socio-emotional learning extensively, or if they were doing so, they did so only through happenstance and sparingly throughout the six-week summer program.

After conducting the study, I realized that my perception of these UB staff’s efforts to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities in UB Programs was limited. The study provided me an in-depth opportunity to learn about this UB Program and the staff’s efforts to foster socio-emotional learning opportunities. I learned that the UB summer staff promoted socio-emotional learning opportunities throughout the six-week period. In fact, promoting socio-emotional learning was a goal of the program’s leadership, and the summer staff shared similar goals.

These efforts are even more noteworthy after examining the regulatory framework governing the program. The regulations do not define what are the necessary skills to succeed in secondary and postsecondary school, but the list of required services shows a preference toward fostering academic skills with much less of a focus on socio-emotional skills. Given the lack of guidance and focus in the regulations on fostering socio-emotional
skills, I did not expect to see a concerted effort to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities. The efforts can be improved. But, the fact that the staff can promote socio-emotional learning under this regulatory framework shows that promoting socio-emotional skills is feasible even when the staff is strained with regard to time.

In light of the study, arguments that the program only has limited time and cannot focus on promoting socio-emotional skills carry less weight. At the same time, the fact that socio-emotional skills are important to academic success supports the argument that the list of required services should include socio-emotional skills. Adding socio-emotional skills to the list of required services relieves some of the time constraints on the program staff.

The study also highlights the importance of capability and capability-building in compensatory education programs serving high school students. As I finished analyzing the data, I was left trying to make sense of how the program staff could promote socio-emotional learning: even though the policy did not require it; the program leaders were not explicit in their goals to promote these skills; and the summer staff did not target any socio-emotional skills in particular. I was puzzled that given the lack of clarity and extensive guidance, the summer staff promoted socio-emotional learning in an ongoing fashion. In this sense, the components in the different ecological systems are not entirely optimal to promote socio-emotional learning. Identifying the capability the staff brought to the policy implementation explained why the staff might be able to maintain efforts to promote socio-emotional learning during the six-week program. The staff members’ values, skills and knowledge, and dispositions helped the staff sustain their efforts throughout the six-weeks. By the same token, I identified areas where capability was lacking and capability-building
would be beneficial. Insufficient clarity and training can partially account for turnover rates and pose problems for policy implementation (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009).

This case study only begins to uncover how the program staff can strengthen their efforts to promote socio-emotional skills. I am curious to learn how this UB Program compares with other programs across geographic and cultural differences. How do staff capabilities differ, and how do these capabilities contribute to the staff efforts to promote socio-emotional learning opportunities during the summer and the academic year? What does effective capability-building through training look like? While programs will inevitably differ across the United States, the programs do hold regional meetings where they help each other learn from their experiences. Eventually, the program can develop a framework that outlines the socio-emotional skills the program should promote.

At a practical level, I was interested in helping the program coordinators improve the local summer program components. Since the beginning of the study, I began discussions with the program director about her program goals and what I was seeing. Given the time constraints of the summer, our discussions of the program were not extensive. However, I learned some key information. First, the program director constantly reiterated her goal to promote socio-emotional learning through the different summer components, such as the schedule and in the hiring of staff members who shared the same goals. Second, the director shared her interest in learning how the program actually promotes socio-emotional learning opportunities. The program has never conducted any internal evaluation of their efforts to promote socio-emotional learning. The results of this study are therefore of interest to the program’s leadership.
I shared preliminary findings with the director, including that the summer staff does promote socio-emotional learning consistently throughout the summer. Moving forward, I will provide the program leadership with the full results on the summer staff members’ conceptualization of socio-emotional skills and their efforts to promote socio-emotional learning during the summer, along with program recommendations on capability-building.

Finally, on a personal note, this project allowed me to work toward finding solutions for children who grow up facing adversity. The question of how education policy can support more equitable opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds remains a topic of debate. While the debate continues, the achievement gap persists, and some argue has even widened (Reardon, 2011). As I conclude this study, I learned that no one solution is the “right” solution. Many efforts are necessary to further help students improve their lives through education. To illustrate the point, consider the following excerpt from Berliner:

[S]chool reforms carried out over the past decades . . . have failed. They need to be abandoned. In their place must come recognition that income inequality causes many social problems, including problems associated with education. Sadly, compared to all other wealthy nations, the USA has the largest income gap between its wealthy and its poor citizens. . . . Thus it is argued that the design of better economic and social policies can do more to improve our schools than continued work on educational policy independent of such concerns. The research question asked is why so many school reform efforts have produced so little improvement in American schools. The answer offered is that the sources of school failure have been thought to reside inside the schools, resulting in attempts to improve America’s teachers, curriculum, testing programs and administration. It is argued in this paper, however, that the sources of America’s educational problems are outside school, primarily a result of income inequality. Thus it is suggested that targeted economic and social policies have more potential to improve the nation’s schools than almost anything currently being proposed by either political party at federal, state or local levels. (Berliner, 2013, p. 1)

Berliner holds that education policies should not be disentangled from the context outside of schools. Yet, policies to improve the schools themselves and the compensatory
programs that support these schools are important. In other words, creating the conditions inside the schools through, for example, resource allocation, high-quality teachers, better testing policies, and school integration matter as do other public policies, such as helping low-income families with food scarcity through the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Each plays a role in helping children acquire the necessary skills to succeed academically and beyond. And each should be improved where warranted.

As I conclude this study, I am more aware of the role that policies concerning compensatory programs for high school students play in helping disadvantaged youth. The strengths that this case study’s UB Program brings in promoting socio-emotional learning are promising. The program has adopted a holistic approach to helping the students succeed academically and otherwise. As with all other policies and their implementation, the UB program’s policy and implementation can be improved, and I hope to play a role in the process.
References


Mass. Ann. Law. Ch. 69, § 1P.


Appendix A: Two-Page Scaffold
(Page 1)
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) COMPETENCIES

**SELF-AWARENESS**
The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset.”
- IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS
- ACCURATE SELF-PERCEPTION
- RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS
- SELF-CONFIDENCE
- SELF-EFFICACY

**SOCIAL AWARENESS**
The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- PERSPECTIVE-TAKING
- EMPATHY
- APPRECIATING DIVERSITY
- RESPECT FOR OTHERS

**RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING**
The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.
- IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS
- ANALYZING SITUATIONS
- SOLVING PROBLEMS
- EVALUATING
- REFLECTING
- ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

**SELF-MANAGEMENT**
The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.
- IMPULSE CONTROL
- STRESS MANAGEMENT
- SELF-DISCIPLINE
- SELF-MOTIVATION
- GOAL SETTING
- ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

**RELATIONSHIP SKILLS**
The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.
- COMMUNICATION
- SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
- RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
- TEAMWORK

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JANUARY 2017

COLLABORATIVE FOR ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

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Appendix B: Interview One Protocol

The interview questions below guided, but did not limit, the interviews. I asked follow-up questions to probe further.

Interviewer:
During our interviews, I will ask you to describe your experience as staff member of the UB Summer Academy. I am interested in your unique perceptions and experience as a staff member and in a program designed to assist students from underprivileged backgrounds. I will ask you questions that are designed to make you think about your experiences in the classroom and/or other activities in which you partake as a Summer Academy staff member. If a question does not apply to you, please let me know.

Please know that there are no right or wrong answers when answering the questions, I’m only looking for you to help me understand your unique insight. I also want to remind you that all information you provide is confidential and will be used for research purposes only. I may be asking about sensitive information and want you to know that you can take a break or end the interview early at any point during the interview for any reason without having to provide a rationale to me.

Staff & Program Understanding and Goals

1. Understanding of socio-emotional learning (SEL): I want to begin by asking you about your views on socio-emotional skills. How would you describe socio-emotional skills? How do you intend to promote socio-emotional learning?
2. What summer staff training session does the program offer?
3. Have you received training in the program about socio-emotional skills? other place besides the program?
4. What program policies, that you are aware of, are designed to promote student socio-emotional skills? How do the program laws, regulations, and policies promote SEL? How do they limit the amount of time that you can dedicate to SEL? the resources that you can dedicate to SEL?
5. How do you communicate with the families at the beginning of the program? throughout the program? about what the program offers? about the program’s policies and practices? about what their children are learning? when there is a student-discipline issue? about the parent’s expectation for their children?
Staff & Students

1. **Discipline/language: scenario**-The residence halls are divided into girls-only and boys-only halls. You find out that one of the students has been sneaking into the other floor where he or she is not allowed. A different student brings the situation to your attention. Can you walk me through how you would respond?

2. **Language: scenario**-The students have a summer-long project to complete. You notice that one of your students is not focused on the work. The student is not turning in the work on time or fails to complete the assignments at all. Can you please describe how you would handle the situation?

3. What sort of opportunities do you plan to provide students so that the students may practice decision-making on their own? for students to help others?

4. Can you please describe how you intend to support the students academically? socially?

5. Can you please describe an activity that illustrates how you plan to incorporate student collaboration (what some might call team work) into your activities?

6. (classroom discussion)-I want you to think of a topic that you are planning to discuss with the students. Can you walk me through how you will discuss the topic with the students?
   a. (balanced instruction)-What might you do to help students gain understanding of the topic?
   b. What kind of student-student interactions do you intend to use to help students learn the topic?

7. Self-reflection and self-assessment
   a. What opportunities do you plan to provide for the students to reflect on their work?
   b. How do you intend to help students set goals? monitor goals?
   c. How do you intend to teach students to seek for help when needed? Search for resources?

8. Reflection: can you describe the opportunities the students will have to reflect on socio-emotional skills they are learning?
9. Can you describe how you set the level of challenge for the work you provide the students? How do you express your expectations for the students regarding the level of challenge you expect them to do?

10. Sequenced/active: Can you describe the activities you will use to teach socio-emotional skills?

11. Focused: can you describe the resources provided for students to learn socio-emotional skills? time allotted? plan?

12. Explicit: what socio-emotional skills does the program hope to teach the students?

13. How would you describe your relationships with the students?

14. What do you do to model the socio-emotional skills you are trying to teach the students?

Staff-Staff Interactions and Staff Well-being

1. Can you please describe your level of stress (e.g., low stress level/high stress) related to the program and your duties in the program? What accounts for your level of stress?

2. Can you please describe your frustrations related to your duties in the program?

3. Tell me about your relationships with other staff members.

Interviewer:
I want to thank you for taking the time to interview today. I will be in contact in the coming week to discuss the possibility of scheduling a follow-up interview.
Appendix C: Interview Two Protocol

The interview questions below guided, but did not limit, the interviews. I asked follow-up questions to probe further.

Interviewer:
Thank you for taking the time to meet once again. As previously mentioned, during our interviews, I will ask you to describe your experience as staff member of the UB Summer Academy. I am interested in your unique perceptions and experience as a staff member and in a program designed to assist students from underprivileged backgrounds. I will ask you questions that are designed to make you think about your experiences in the classroom and/or other activities in which you partake as a Summer Academy staff member. If a question does not apply to you, please let me know.

I want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers, so please be as honest as possible when answering the questions to help me understand your unique insight. I also want to remind you that all information you provide is confidential and will be used for research purposes only. I may be asking about sensitive information and want you to know that you can take a break or end the interview early at any point during the interview for any reason without having to provide a rationale to me.

Staff & Program Understanding and Goals

1. *Understanding of socio-emotional learning (SEL)*: I want to begin by asking you again about your views on socio-emotional skills. How would you describe socio-emotional skills now? How did you promote socio-emotional learning?
2. What summer staff training sessions did the program offer?
3. Did you receive training in the program about socio-emotional skills? other place besides the program?
4. What program policies, that you are aware of, are designed to promote student socio-emotional skills? How do the program laws, regulations, and policies promote SEL? How do they limit the amount of time that you can dedicate to SEL? the resources that you can dedicate to SEL?
5. How did you communicate with the families at the beginning of the program? throughout the program? about what the program offers? about the program’s policies and practices? about what their children are learning? when there is a student-discipline issue? about the parent’s expectation for their children?
Staff & Students

1. **Discipline/language**: Did you have to handle any student-discipline issues? Can you walk me through how you handled the situation?

2. **Language**: scenario-Can you provide me an example of when you had to motivate or encourage one of the students?

3. What sort of opportunities did you provide students so that the students practiced decision-making on their own? for students to help others?

4. Can you please describe how you supported the students academically? socially?

5. Can you please describe an activity that illustrates how you incorporated student collaboration (what some might call team work) into your activities?

6. (classroom discussion)-I want you to think of a topic that you discussed with the students. Can you walk me through how you discussed the topic with the students?
   a. (balanced instruction)-What did you do to help students gain understanding of the topic?
   b. What kind of student-student interactions did you use to help students learn the topic?

7. Self-reflection and self-assessment
   a. What opportunities did you provide for the students to reflect on their work?
   b. How did you help students set goals? monitor goals?
   c. How did you teach students to seek for help when needed? search for resources?

8. Reflection: Can you describe the opportunities the students had to reflect on the socio-emotional skills they were learning?

9. Can you describe how you set the level of challenge for the work you provided to the students? How did you express your expectations for the students regarding the level of challenge you expected them to do?

10. Sequenced/active: Can you describe the activities you used to teach socio-emotional skills?

11. Focused: Can you describe the resources provided for students to learn socio-emotional skills? time allotted? plan?

12. Explicit: What socio-emotional skills did the program hope to teach the students?
13. How would you describe your relationships with the students?

14. How did you model the socio-emotional skills you were trying to teach the students?

**Staff-Staff Interactions and Staff Well-being**

1. Can you please describe your level of stress (e.g., low stress level/high stress) related to the program and your duties in the program? What accounts for your level of stress?

2. Can you please describe your frustrations related to your duties in the program?

3. Tell me about your relationships with other staff members.

**Interviewer:**
I want to thank you for taking the time to interview today and for your assistance with the research project. If you have any questions please contact me via email ([rum232@psu.edu](mailto:rum232@psu.edu)) or phone 814.380.6423. You can also contact my dissertation committee with any comments, concerns, or questions.

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Appendix D: Observation Protocol

The items listed below guided, but did not limit, my observations. I also noted other actions.

**Processes (quality of interactions):**

*Top Ten Teacher Practices that Promote SEL*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Management of student discipline</th>
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<td>(student-centered? Less punitive? Consequences connected to the rule(s) broken?)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Language</th>
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<td>(e.g., encourages effort and work; encourages students to monitor their own work and behavior)</td>
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<th>Responsibility and choice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(gives students choices so that they may practice responsible choice-making; provides students opportunities for students to help others)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Warmth and Support</th>
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<td>(e.g., asks academic/social questions; follows up with students about problems or concerns; provides own anecdotes for students)</td>
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<th>Cooperative learning</th>
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<td>(positive interdependence, individual accountability, promoting one another’s successes, applying interpersonal and social skills, and group discussing progress toward achieving goal)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Classroom discussions</th>
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<td>(e.g., asks open-ended questions, asks students to elaborate on own thinking, dialogue is student written)</td>
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<th>Self-reflection and self-assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td>(asks students to actively think about their own work; student goal-setting)</td>
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and monitoring toward goal; teaches students to seek help and search for resources)

**Balanced instruction** (provides direct instruction but also allows students to learn through experience; provides opportunities for individual student work and collaborative work)

**Academic press and expectations** (provides challenging work for all students and believes all students can and will succeed)

**Competence building-modeling, practicing, feedback and coaching** (builds in socio-emotional learning (SEL) systematically; each part of instructional cycle reinforces SEL)

**SAFE program strategies most effective in promoting SEL**

- **Sequenced**: connecting, coordinating activities that support SEL across the program
- **Active**: using active learning to teach socio-emotional skills
- **Focused**: dedicating time, resources, and a plan to develop socio-emotional skills
- **Explicit**: targeting particular socio-emotional skills
- **Reflection**: providing opportunities for students to reflect

*Note: Program strategies may be good even if all these qualities are not present. Depending on the topic observed, it may be that not all above are present in one lesson. Several observations may be needed.*
**Person:**

*Staff SEC*

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<th>Self-awareness &amp; self-management</th>
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<td>Cultural awareness</td>
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<td>Social-awareness &amp; relationship skills</td>
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<td>Pro-social behavior</td>
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<td>Responsible decision-making</td>
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</table>

**Training**

| Do they discuss student/staff SEL and SEC? |  |

**Staff-student relationships**

| How do staff members approach students? |  |

**Modeling Socio-Emotional Competence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-awareness</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-awareness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible decision-making</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note: not all characteristics may be present in the time that I have with them.*

**Context:**

**Micro-system**

| How the environment contributes/interrupts SEL (e.g., few resources, running out of time, no stable place to execute activities) |  |
**Meso-system**

| Reach out efforts from staff to families |

**Exo-system**

| Observe staff-staff interactions and climate in the program (supportive of SEL? too stressful? tension?) |

**Macro-system**

*NONE*

**Time:**

**Micro-time**

| Continuous SEL (isolated activities? woven throughout?) |

**Meso-time**

| Periodicity of activities throughout the 6 weeks (How consistent are the SEL activities?) |
## Appendix E: Quotes Conceptualizing Socio-Emotional Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social-Awareness</th>
<th>Self-Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“cultural competency”-C2</td>
<td>Brooklyn: “understand other people’s point of view”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“respecting everybody’s point of view” and “diversity”-AD</td>
<td>“well-rounded perspective on the world”-C3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“grit that’s necessary to get through and then navigate through today’s world, today’s culture”-AD</td>
<td>Franklin: “empathy” “you need to look at other people in the room or in your classrooms, and think about how different their backgrounds might be from yours”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edna: “trying to be more empathetic”</td>
<td>Donna: Awareness of “cultural conflicts or socio-emotional factors” to help students and classmates thrive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wilton: “empathy for people in different situations” “to get people to reflect on what it would be like to be in somebody else’s shoes, to interact with the world in a different way” “relating to things that are happening in day to day world,” and “can tie that in and see other perspectives”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rae: “social ethics as a concept for informing students about becoming socially aware and understanding how different issues impact them” “getting them to think beyond the boundaries of their day-to-day framework and to understand there are other frameworks” “to be aware that you do view yourself in a certain way within a socially constructed environment”</td>
<td>Bette: “understanding of different backgrounds, different opinions on things” “understand why someone else has those values but I have mine and maybe mine change and maybe theirs change”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dortha: “you work better when you feel that you’re being heard, when you feel people are listening to you, when you feel you have something to say that is important, when you feel comfortable in contributing to conversations.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn: understand “there aren’t always perfect answers, if I can get data and you can get data and you could have just no idea what it means, and that doesn’t mean you’re a failure as a scientist”</td>
<td>Maddox: “make them speak” “make them be creative” Reminder “that everything has value”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edna: “be self-aware of their limits” and “know where they need help or support”</td>
<td>Bernard: “find the answers out themselves”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna: Awareness of “trauma or discomfort” to help students and classmates thrive</td>
<td>Rae: “social ethics as a concept for informing students about”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Self-Management**

| “time management”-C1 | Donna: “Don’t start a statement with no. Don’t call people names.” |
| “stress management”-C1 | Edna: “motivation or aspiration to go to the end goal” |
| “coping skills”-C1 | “time management” |
| “ability to overcome adversity”-AD | “budgeting” |
| Manage self with “training wheels off”-AD | “distributing their time” |

**Relationship Skills**

*Edna:*

- “interpersonal relationships … the way that you could bond, make connections with others in a significant way”
- “understand how important is to first bond with others”
- “being able to communicate”
- “Personal relationships when they are working in groups”

*Bernard:*

- “listening skills” and “well thought out” response

*Dollie:*

- “branching out of comfort zone” by “talk[ing]” to each other

*Wilber:*

- “the way you ask questions without being too intrusively, asking questions using how and what . . . so people feel like they can open up more”
- “understanding how important conversation is and how you go about it”

*Franklin:*

- “cooperation”

*Maddox:*

- “how you apply your different emotions in the social complex”
- “social skills”

*Wilda:*

- “whenever somebody makes you upset, you always just let them know because sometimes they’re not aware that you’re upset at them.”
| Arnold: “how they interact with other students or . . . with instructors” | Bobby: “listening to one another” |
| “having meaningful interactions with each other and actually working together towards a common goal” | Lucy: “trying to get along with other” people |
| Donna: “understanding how people feel, and think, and process emotions in order to be able to better communicate with them” |  |
| Responsible Decision-Making |  |
| “independence”-AD | Donna: “decision-making, and understanding possible consequences” |
| “maturity”-AD | Rae: “social ethics as a concept for informing students about becoming socially aware and understanding how different issues impact them” |
| Able to make responsible decisions with “training wheels off”-AD | Joanne: “to be able to make good choices or be less indecisive” |
| “reading critically and writing critically” |  |

**Legend**: AD: assistant director; C1: counselor 1; C2: counselor 2; C3: counselor 3

**Color Legend**:
- = administrators
- = instructors
- = residential mentors
Appendix F: Schedule of Study

I divided the study into the following phases.

Phase 0: Preparatory Phase (May 2017-June 11, 2017)

During the pre-summer program phase, I:

- Collected summer program documents, including calendars and schedules
- Coordinated with the director to determine where I could potential recruit participants (not limited to academic v. non-academic components)
- Recruited as many study participants as possible by attending the training sessions and distributing a sign-up sheet for further contact

Phase 1: Week 1-2 (June 12, 2017-June 25, 2017)

During the first phase, I:

- Continued to build rapport with the summer staff members by greeting them and interacting with them to the greatest extent possible in a friendly and professional manner
- Conducted interviews with participants who signed up and sent follow up emails to participants who had not signed up yet; I took notes during the interview.
- Asked participants interviewing to fill out the personal assessment if they had not yet done so
- Emailed participants to coordinate classroom observations
- Visited curricular and extra-curricular activities where staff members interacted with the students and attended staff meetings when available; documented observations in each instance
- Emailed participants who had not signed up for an interview to sign-up
• Coordinated with the residential coordinator to interview all residential mentors during the second week of the program

**Phase 2: Week 3-6 (June 26, 2017-July 18, 2017)**

During the second phase, I:

• Continued program observations in the classrooms, residential commons, events, other extra-curricular activities, and staff meetings when possible

• Conducted post-summer program interviews with participants as the participants finished their summer duties

**Phase 3: Week Post Summer Period (July 18, 2017-Spring2018)**

During the final phase, I:

• Finalized pending interviews with residential mentors and administrators

• Began data analysis

• Wrote the findings and implications
Appendix G: Ethical Matters and Confidentiality

Obtaining Consent

I provided information on the voluntary nature of the program and the explained the purpose of the study during the training sessions where I was allowed to recruit participants. I explained the potential participants their rights and the voluntary nature of their participation. Before beginning any interview, I again reiterated the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, and the participants’ rights to answer or skip a question and to cease further participation at any point for any reason and without having to provide any further rationale.

Risks

The study posed minimal risks to the participants. The participants could potentially have experienced mental exhaustion and in some cases may have relieved past unpleasant experiences related to staff-staff interactions, for example. To minimize the risks, I remained cognizant of the participants time. At the hour mark, I asked the participants whether they wanted to continue the interview, would prefer to meet at a different time, or any other means of communication if still interested in participating. Nearly all participants who passed the hour mark chose to continue past the hour. Additionally, I also offered to pause and take a break if I noticed participants visibly upset or experiencing discomfort.

The study also presented a risk of loss of confidentiality if the participants’ information or identity through data breach. To minimize the risk, I took all feasible steps to prevent this. I stored all data and protected it through passwords. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
Privacy

I conducted all interviews in private spaces. I interviewed administrators in their offices, on their time. During the interview time, the administrators closed their doors and previously notified others that they would not be available during the interview time. Given that some of the interviews took place after the summer program begun, the administrators sometimes had to answer knocks on the door and other phone calls. At these times, I paused the interview and resumed after unless the administrator had to leave to resolve any issues. I avoided discussing any interview questions when anyone else other than the interviewees was present in person or over the phone.

I interviewed the instructors in my office and maintained their privacy by locking my door and advising any other summer office staff that I would not be available. Finally, I interviewed all residential mentors at the residence halls, with a few exceptions. I worked with the residential coordinator to schedule the times and place where I could meet with the residential mentors in a private space without interruptions. No students or other residential mentors were near the private space where I met with every residential mentor.

For the post-summer program interviews, I met with all the administrators in their private offices and with the instructors in my office. The residential mentors had largely left town after the program. Therefore, I conducted the interviews via phone in my office with no one else present and locked my office to avoid anyone walking in inadvertently.

Record Keeping

I created a master roster with the names of all participants and their respective pseudonyms created by a name generator. I stored the master list in a password protected storage site approved by the IRB. I used my word processor to record field notes. I avoided
identifying participants to the greatest extent possible. I then transferred the field notes into NVivo, a password-protected qualitative data-analysis software. With the participants’ permission, I also recorded all interviews using my phone recorder. These audio recordings were immediately transferred within the next 24 hours after the end of the interviews into a file in my personal computer and were deleted from my phone. I transferred all audios and transcribed interviews into NVivo and will store the data in NVivo indefinitely. Finally, I also recorded my researcher memos and summaries in NVivo. The data are password-protected.

**Accessing Data**

Only I have access to the data. My advisor has worked closely with me but did not have the particulars for any study participant.

I conducted all interviews and observation at the UB Program site offices. The observations occurred in the assigned classrooms while observations of other extracurricular activities took place at other assigned classrooms, auditoriums, or residential common areas.

No outside funding was used for the project. However, at the conclusion of the data collection process, I received a graduate school scholarship to assist with transcription costs. The participants did not receive any monetary incentive and did not incur any costs.
Vita—Raquel Muñiz Castro

Education____________________________________________________________

Ph.D.        Educational Theory & Policy, Pennsylvania State University, 2018
J.D.         Pennsylvania State University, Dickinson School of Law, 2018
B.A.         Mathematics, summa cum laude, Texas A&M International University, 2013

Professional Experience (selected)
Research Assistant/Student, Center for Immigrants’ Rights, Penn State Law, 2017-18
Policy Intern/Research Assistant, Children’s Advocacy Clinic, Penn State Law, 2017-18
Teaching Assistant, Introduction to U.S. Legal Systems, Penn State Law, 2016-17

Grants______________________________________________________________
2017, $310,856, U.S. Dept. of Education, Upward Bound Math and Science, team member
2017, $499,000, U.S. Dept. of Education, Upward Bound Regular, team member
2017, $275,000, U.S. Dept. of Education, Upward Bound Regular, team member

Publications__________________________________________________________


Honors and Awards (selected)_____________________________________________
Outstanding Scholarly Contribution, Yearbook on Arbitration and Mediation, 2017
Valedictorian, Texas A&M Int’l University, 2013
Graduating Class Distinguished Student Speaker, Texas A&M Int’l University, 2013