On the Emotional Toll and Tensions of Doing Socioemotional Work in an Urban Setting

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ABSTRACT

In this critical qualitative case study, I explored the implementation of a P-6 urban elementary school's SEL program (SEL+). Through analyzing a combination of classroom observations, two in-depth interviews, and artifact collection, this study illuminates two themes: how reflexivity leads to heightened self-awareness among school personnel, the emotional labor that occurs consequently, and secondly, the ongoing challenges teachers and administrators face as they implement SEL praxis (and SEL+) in their schools, including the continued use of deficit-laden language and policing of students' bodies. The study aims to inform and add to the growing field of SEL in public educational contexts as a way for administrators, educators, and preservice teachers to better serve their students. Attending to SEL's implications for trauma-informed personnel and their (emotional) needs, it also provides additional significance to the growing work of equity possibilities and limitations within a SEL context. Recommendations for future implementations are also included.

Keywords: trauma informed SEL, equity, critical case study

With an estimated 72% of U.S. children experiencing a traumatic event before their eighteenth birthday, school personnel must address these adverse experiences (Whitaker et al., 2019). The Substance Abuse & Mental Health Administration (SAMSA) defines a traumatic event as physical or emotional, sometimes ongoing, and with "lasting adverse effects on an individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing" (2014, p. 7). Children face neglect (75%), physical abuse (18%) and sexual abuse (9%) (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2017). Kim and Drake (2018) add that children's adverse experiences disproportionately affect those experiencing poverty across race/ethnic markers. In

turn, teachers experience the adverse effects of this maltreatment through emotional and behavioral crises at schools (Jennings, 2019; Souers & Hall, 2016). Public schools may attend to students' emotional needs by proactively supporting teachers as they respond to emotional and behavioral incidents with trauma-informed or trauma-sensitive professional development and training (DeCandia & Guarino, 2015; Jennings, 2019). Research on the impact of school-based trauma-informed care (TIC) on teachers and staff (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020) and mindfulness-based socioemotional learning (SEL) or trauma-informed SEL (Kim, et al., 2021) remains sparse. Mindfulness-based, trauma-informed, and equity oriented SEL seem interchangeable; distinctions and overlap exist based on frameworks and conceptualizations (Jones, Bailey et al., 2019).

School-based mindfulness as a conceptual and instrumental framework may adapt adult mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) to youth-friendly versions such as guided meditations or more integrated approaches like MindUP which equips teachers with skills and strategies (i.e., scripted curriculum) to implement on their own and with their students (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

SEL or "the process through which students and adults…apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (CASEL, 2020, para 1) may be adapted to the needs of (students and adult) populations (Cirpriano, 2019). However, scholars criticize SEL programs' disregard of students' sociocultural, multilingual backgrounds and failure to address roots of traumatic experiences (Ginwright, 2018; Kaler-Jones, 2020; Love, 2019). Integrating SEL programs (with White educators leading training primarily) at urban sites with higher densities of historically marginalized youth populations could be harmful by unintentionally promoting White, normative behavior (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; McConnell et al., 2020). As urban schools like this study's site integrate equity language and support trauma survivors in their school, they must incorporate asset rather than deficit perspectives, willingly interrogating the undercurrents of implicit racial bias and other social adversity issues absent in SEL curricula (Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Simmons, 2019).

Ultimately, this study documents and articulates the experiences of teachers, administrators, and coordinators at a low-income public school located in a smaller urban city (population of 1 million with a growing racialized minority; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021) as they are introduced to a localized, social-emotional curriculum called SEL+.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tracing SEL in the Trauma-Informed Context and Paradigm Shifts

Trauma-informed care (TIC) and school-based trauma-informed models look at students' emotions and propose shifts in disciplinary responses to those negative emotional moments (Center for Health Care Strategies, 2018; Evans & Coccoma, 2014). For example, school personnel are encouraged to ask students "what happened to you" rather than "what is wrong with you" (Sporleder & Forbes, 2016. p. 4). A

trauma informed SEL approach or framework "guides systems, behaviors, practices, and policies to shift organizational culture and mindsets to be sensitive to trauma" (Simmons et al., 2018, p.7). Restorative practices or a relationship-focused, community-building approach seeking to proactively prevent conflict or redress harms (Wachtel, 2016) as opposed to punitive (suspension, detention) policies, exemplifies training options. Punitive approaches exacerbate disciplinary issues (Hulvershon & Mulholland, 2018) and disproportionately target youth of color (Whitaker et al., 2019; Milner et al., 2019; Skiba, 2014). In their review of the literature on restorative practices and the integration of social-emotional models, Hulvershon and Mulholland (2018) ascertained that paradigm shifts among school personnel must occur (for significant change) including movement towards: 1) human-centered approach (i.e., looking at the child's needs not rules broken); 2) trusting relationship with students (i.e., build student capacity to solve issues); 3) modeling accepting one's own mistakes (i.e., recognizing when personnel escalate a situation); and 4) centering creative approaches (i.e., viewing obstacles as challenges to solve) (p. 120). Notably training requires funding, staff, and time.

Personnel buy-in and their own beliefs on teaching affect success of implementation (Reyes et al., 2012; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). For example, Ee and Cheng (2016) in their study of educators in Singapore implementing SEL, a primary barrier for full integration was the belief that SEL does not translate to academic outcomes and that there was insufficient time to implement both SEL and content requirements (pp. 65-66). Balancing between holistic/character education and content-area focus is an ongoing challenge despite research suggesting principals (DePaoli et al., 2017) and K-12 teachers recognize the importance of SEL integration for students' overall wellbeing (Bridgeland et al., 2013; Buchanan et al., 2009; Weissberg, 2019). Equity-centered trauma-informed models and practices add another, often overlooked element, where trauma-informed professional development training detracts from addressing equity issues (e.g., racism in schools) (Venet, 2021). Venet's study (2021) provides starting points for such implementation. This study adds to the equity-centered trauma-informed conversation as SEL+ aimed to maintain such goals while navigating systemic and socialized challenges such as deficit stereotyping.

Why School Practitioners' Wellbeing Matters and Mindfulness Helps

SEL's positive effect on students' emotional wellbeing is well-documented (Durlak et al., 2011; Durlak, Domitrovich, et al., 2015; Jones & Bouffard, 2012), however, consider trauma informed SEL's impact on teachers. Figley (1995) writes of a cost for caring which can be interpreted as secondary traumatic stress (Baicker, 2020; Caringi et al., 2015) or vicarious trauma (Minero, 2017) as teachers listen to their students' traumatic experiences, empathize over time, finding themselves overwhelmed. Burnout, characterized by excessive stress due to work conditions leads among other factors to 50% of teachers leaving the profession after five years (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Burnout not only affects teachers but also students (Kim et al., 2021; Koenig et al., 2017). For example Arens and Morin's (2016) extensive study of Canadian teachers' emotional exhaustion (a component of burnout) found a

direct negative effect on student grades, engagement, and school satisfaction. Consequently, SEL researchers reflecting on SEL's direction note that practitioners' well-being is paramount (Jones, Bailey et al., 2019; Schonert-Reichl, 2019).

School-based mindfulness programs affect future SEL implementation and help teachers and students overcome barriers to equity in SEL implementation (Simmons et al., 2018). Programs such as Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP), the U.K.'s first school-based mindfulness program (Beshai et al., 2014; Kukyen et al., 2013), MindUP, a U.S. mindfulness-based SEL (Maloney et al., 2016), and Mindful Schools, a U.S. based program (Viglas & Perlman, 2018) are just a few with researched effectiveness (Baelen et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2021). Each of these programs train educators focusing on self-awareness and emphasize adult modeling of mindfulness (Baelen et al., 2019). Mindfulness enables self-regulation, alleviates stress, prevents impulsive actions (Farb et al., 2012), reduces burnout in teachers as it enables teachers to flexibly problem solve, grow resilient to challenges, emotionally regulate, compassionately respond to others, and nonjudgmentally reflect on one's experiences (Roeser et al., 2013). Zinsser et al.'s (2016) analysis of preschool teachers concluded that those with SEL support at their center (i.e., training, resources) report higher job satisfaction and feeling less depressed. This bolsters other research such as Greenberg et al.'s (2016) brief on SEL interventions' positive impact on teacher stress, burnout, and overall well-being, and specifically, from mindfulness programs with school personnel (Weare, 2014) and teachers (Jennings et al., 2017).

Finally, I note how school-based trauma-informed care, school-based mindfulness, and socioemotional learning interlock and function at the urban public elementary school where this study takes place. Kim et al. (2021) posit that integrating mindfulness-based SEL programs supports trauma-informed frameworks and that this is an area that needs further research as well. In this way, this study adds to the literature in two important spaces: practitioners' experiences with an integrative (trauma-informed, mindfulness embedded) SEL curriculum, and their mental wellbeing which impacts the efficacy and success of the program (in elementary school settings) (Kim et al., 2021; Martínez, 2016; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I use Nel Noddings' (1999/2002/2005) cared-for/caring-about theory from her larger ethics of care scholarship. Teachers and the school system have a responsibility to help students feel cared-for and in turn are supported and car[ed]-about (Noddings, 2005). And so, she emphasizes how care relationships are dialogical (e.g., between and among teachers, administrators, and students), interdependent (i.e., treatment of others affects student/teacher/administrator's actions), and foundational to successful pedagogical activity (e.g., student engagement, motivation, attention to learning tasks). Applying this frame to the data illuminates the emotional challenges but also positive moments and conditions (i.e., collegial support, common trauma-informed language, mindfulness tools) carers had and SEL+'s role in those moments (Noddings, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

In this critical qualitative case study, I sought to answer the following question: What are the experiences of teachers, coordinators, and administrators with SEL+ as it is implemented in a public elementary school?

As a critical case study, I excavated the patterns related to SEL work and the "how's" and "why's" of doing this kind of work in a school setting (Yin, 2018, p. 224). My constructionist epistemic leanings align with Stake's (1995) as a reporter and constructor of multilayered realities, allowing for the "holistic" and "interpretative" nature of this case (Yazan, 2015, p. 139). A critical case study's flexibility embraces the researcher's own construct of context, and this study, SEL+, and its perceptions throughout data collection (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Participants were limited to educators directly working with SEL+ either through administering the lessons or applying them. The data collection was limited to the school building, class times, and disciplinary patterns observed in class and hallways.

Case Narrative: Contextualizing the School Site and SEL+ Curriculum

Marbury Elementary School is a public elementary school serving approximately 300 pre-K to sixth grade students. Students are primarily African American (42.7%), Hispanic (31.6%), and White (12.1%) (State Department of Education [SDE], 2019) and are almost all low-income, nearly 100% receiving free and reduced lunch (SDE, 2019). The six classrooms I entered had White teachers, with the exception of one Black teacher. No published data on demographic teacher-student ratio currently exists. Both Ramona, the principal, and Emma, the SEL coordinator, acknowledge the racial disparity and need for more diverse staff. Its location enables students to walk to school and holds notoriety for crime, violence, and drugs, yet a couple of blocks away high-end shopping centers exist. In September 2019, it had an onsite social worker, several behavioral specialists, and coordinators for other social services. Its urban designation stems from the works of Milner (2012), Irby (2014), and Milner and Lomotey, (2014) who discuss metropolitan spaces of various sizes whose inhabitants are racially minoritized persons.

The SEL+ curriculum centers on teaching and learning techniques designed to address trauma, anxiety, stress, and behavioral issues, and to foster self-regulation to counter negative and harmful factors in the lives of students (and adults) (SEL+, n.d., p. 2). Its motto "Move, Play, Regulate" refers to SEL+'s central components paralleled in SEL programs (Jones, Brush et al., 2017). Emma's own experiences of childhood poverty and her personal traumatic experiences led her to look for ways to empower students facing similar challenges.

SEL+ consists of once-a-week thirty-minute lessons adapted to pre-K to sixth grade. I attended at least one lesson in every grade level except sixth grade. An average lesson consists of three to four parts in the classroom:

1) Mood Meter or informal feeling check. Introduction to topics like self-awareness.
2) "Move" (e.g., yoga poses) or "Regulate" (e.g., breathing techniques), or "Play" (e.g., Stand up/Sit down- a game were students nonjudgmentally note the students that stand up in affirmation to questions that increase in

seriousness from "stand up if you like rollercoasters" to "stand up if you know someone in jail").

3) Finally, "off the mat/ What can I teach?". This can be a question or statement that students respond to verbally or in written form. Students (and teachers) may teach their family members one of the activities or practice them and then share their experience next lesson.

SEL+ posters located by discipline ladders or rules charts document their activities and serve as a reference for teachers and students in Emma's absence. Administrators expected students and teachers' participation and presence. In this way, teachers receive informal professional development, encouraged to apply SEL+ tools and reflect on the class conversations in their own practice, though thirty minutes weekly was seemingly not enough (field notes, September 30, 2019).

Table 1 provides more in-depth descriptions and positionalities of the three major adult participants in this study (n=3): one SEL coordinator, one instructional mentor/former teacher, and one principal.

Table 1: Participants Profiles

Participant, Role in School	Responsible for…	Profile
Emma, Social-Emotional Learning Coordinator	All teachers and staff Pre-K-6th grade	A White woman with 20+ years of community organizing experience, creating the area's first shelter for women experiencing domestic violence and teaching yoga classes for adults with disabilities. Has taught SEL+ classes at nonprofits serving primarily economically marginalized communities. Provided SEL+ training to teachers statewide before entering Marbury Elementary full-time Spring 2019.
Rochelle, Instructional Mentor	Same	A multiracial woman, first-grade teacher (3 years) before becoming an Instructional Mentor (organizing professional development for all teachers) at Marbury Elementary. Supports Emma through formal integration of SEL+ in some of the weekly

		professional development required for all staff and providing classroom management/behavioral support. A school counseling and psychology graduate student.
Ramona, School Principal	Same	A White woman, been at Marbury Elementary for 6 years and the school district for 18 years. Initiated trauma-informed professional development starting in 2015, hired Emma for full-time SEL support to staff and students at the school, citing trauma as a central obstacle to students' academic success (Interview, lines 39-42).

Data Collection

Data was collected between September 2019 and January 2020, and after Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. I went two to three times a week, primarily in the mornings up to two hours at a time as a nonparticipant observer or observer-as-participant role (Adler & Adler, n.d., p. 84). I turned field note "jottings" into "extended narrative segments" within 24 hours of each visit (Emerson et al., 2011, pp. 34, 109). I focused on the atmosphere, any emergencies, and on the interactions between the SEL coordinator or teacher and the students and students' responses to SEL+ activities. Observing both the students and the SEL coordinator/teacher provided a holistic view of this curriculum's reception and relationships (i.e., between teachers/coordinator and students), an underlying aspect of SEL+ and any SEL-oriented curriculum. After I interviewed Emma about perceptions of SEL+ at Marbury Elementary in October, I prepared focus group interview questions. The focus group interview "complement[ed] individual interviews, each yielding different information" (Patton, 2015, p. 479). Interviews were recorded using my phone, then transcribed using Otter.ai.

Throughout, I photographed, photocopied, and collected artifacts including those related to the curriculum (e.g., paper birds, Hoberman Sphere), worksheets, and handouts. For example, teachers can reference "Test Tools" before and after the state tests. Fourth-sixth grade students can jot mind-body connections (i.e., notice your body when you are mad) and write positive self-affirmations to counter negative self-talk. "Test Tools" illustrate both SEL+'s language and how it addresses the needs of all age groups. Teachers learn and can utilize these same tools and language as they do their own self-care work.

Data Analysis

I engaged in an in vivo coding and open coding process. In this way, I "create[ed] and discover[ed] the meaning of and in the notes all along" (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 190). I extrapolated key themes after categorizing my codes. This open coding process helped me "elaborate, deepen, and refine or discard themes developed at earlier points in time" (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 188) and note biases and subjectivity considerations (Peshkin, 1988). Engaging in peer debriefing regarding my codes helped identify my coding process and thematic suggestions. Through this process, I sifted through many contextual codes (i.e., SEL+ perceptions, curricular delineations).

I offered participants member checks for individual interviews. Participants could make changes, omit data or completely withdraw, giving them full control over their right to privacy and intellectual property (Patton, 2015, p. 343). I compared interview codes with my field notes and artifact memos for differences and similarities, triangulating the data to show the nuances of interpretations and attitudes during SEL+'s first full semester of implementation.

As the interviews, classroom observations, and artifacts were collected, the study evolved. Interviews demonstrated the administrators' underlying philosophies and preceding years of experimentation and training leading to the school's equity-centered, trauma-informed, SEL focus trajectory. Observations and artifact data illustrated Emma's role and increased staff buy-in towards a trauma-informed direction using SEL+ as part of that effort (Interview). Nevertheless, with all these positive changes, challenges emerged. First, reflexivity led to heightened self-awareness and emotional labor and second, tensions linked to deficit stereotyping and policing. The latter attends to how SEL-oriented practice builds capacity for positive change (i.e., equity efforts), and how the continuation of implicit bias, deficit-laden language (Pyscher & Lozenski, 2017), policing (Kaler-Jones, 2020) and punitive policies (Meiners, 2016) impedes on this progression. I intersperse the voices/actions of teachers, administrators, and coordinators in the findings as I looked at schoolwide efforts.

FINDINGS

Reflexivity: Heightened Self-Awareness Among School Personnel

Firstly, teachers and administrators receiving SEL+ training, noted heightened self-awareness and emotions in high-stress situations. Emma observed:

> I think that, as humans, sometimes we don't understand we get in what might be called in some theories "states of mind." And when we're in that state. We really are not able to see our own behavior. And so, getting out of the state is the first thing, and then actually going through it when they're calmer. (Interview, lines 337-340)

Emma references both teachers and students' "state[s] of mind". For teachers, such states impede diffusing situations. When students are stuck in a fight or flight

response or they are only able to see the wrongs done towards them, they tend to not be able to see who cares for them. Noddings' (1999) practice component of care illustrates this phenomenon because the teacher recognizes their own mentality (i.e., state of mind) and actively practices caring as a means of pushing past this state of mind.

During our focus group interview, Ramona and Rochelle added to Emma's point regarding limits to self-awareness due to "states of mind" when they each discuss the human side of trauma-informed work. After inquiring about her underlying disciplinary philosophy, Ramona asserted punishment alone is not enough and so students and adults need to understand that:

> I'm going to get upset about things and bad things are going to happen. What am I going to do when that happens? It's hard because we're all humans too. And our feelings get hurt as well. So that's part of what we're working on as well recognizing when I might be part of the problem right now because I'm really mad at you or whatever. So, we do adult social emotional stuff as well. (focus group interview, lines 131-137).

Rochelle, the instructional mentor, added her perspective and that of her colleagues as a former teacher when trauma-informed approaches increased prominence at the school:

> I feel like we've talked about [trauma] for a long time. Getting to the root of why is this important? Like, how, why is this coming up? How is it coming up in classrooms and impacting the ability to learn and now we're at a point of, now what can we do to be proactive to help our students? …It took a long time getting there but that big why and addressing why we need to talk about this was very important because I think everyone kind of knew it impacted their class. But it was hard to really like, put a label on it and see where do you see it in your kids? ... Like I can say, as a teacher, I was often part of the problem, and I did not realize it in the moment…development was important to …where we are now. (focus group interview, lines 234-245)

Being human and imperfect allows for grace. However, when teachers are faced with negative interactions with students, self-awareness can prevent becoming "part of the problem" (lines 134, 244). Noddings (1999) recognizes *dialogue* between the caring educator and the recipient of the care. For Rochelle and Ramona, the relationship between the student and the teacher/staff member must be predicated on self-awareness and recognition that the negative interaction may have a deeper meaning than just a child refusing to do their math worksheet or angrily leaving the classroom (both observed). I add that this dialogue can also be an internal one within the educator's mind, synonymous with a heightened self-awareness to deescalate situations and be more attentive of one's role and positionality in the scenario (i.e., as an authority figure to model ways to regulate emotion and show care for the recipient). Saying "I need to calm down" is one way that teachers can model self-awareness for their students.

When teachers are exposed to trauma-informed approaches and have conversations like Rochelle had with her colleagues, they can support one another

and move towards a more positive (i.e., less stressful) classroom and school climate as a result (Jennings et al., 2017). The label (i.e., trauma) for the issues that they were seeing with their students gave them the tools and language to then look for resources and training to address their students' needs. We need to make sure that these labels are part of a comprehensive assessment of the child. With SEL+, initial lessons center self-awareness and the mind-body-feeling connection, which Emma referred to repeatedly (Field notes; SEL+, pp. 19-24). Self-awareness comes in multiple forms whether they are "states of minds" as Emma called them or as recognizing their own role in the conflict, as Ramona and Rochelle described.

Emotional Labor: Emotional Drain Connected With This Heightened Self-Awareness

While heightened self-awareness can help in de-escalation, it can also be emotionally draining (and thus a barrier to full implementation). Rochelle brought this up when discussing the effects of this work on the teachers emotionally during the focus group. She admits, "every day is just so draining and hard... Like, if you see the trauma in your kids, and you have so much empathy for them that it affects you physically and mentally" (focus group interview, lines 452-456). She adds why her colleagues left teaching altogether. Later in the interview, when sharing more context about teachers' responses to trauma-informed work, Rochelle notes "all that stuff, like there was a lot to it. It was very heavy stuff, especially when you have teachers that have trauma too and like they must deal with that stuff too on their own" (focus group interview, lines 240-242). Heightened self-awareness is empowering and draining as it can excavate personal traumas that are then brought into the classroom. Notably, teachers' capacity to build heightened self-awareness takes time and is not necessarily a pleasant journey. Such experiences can manifest in the way that a teacher responds to a child's tone of voice or behavior.

Tensions With Deficit Stereotypes/Policing of Bodies

Finally, I noted examples of deficit language and policing in my classroom observations. Some of these examples connect to the reality of teaching students in poverty but, as Gorski (2018) warns, these realities are damaging stereotypes further marginalizing families and students, especially those in poverty. While it is evident that the administrators, teachers, and staff I interviewed and observed had the best intentions, deficit language still seeped into the interviews. Critiques of socioemotional learning focus on not only the lack of connections to systemic issues (Kaler-Jones, 2020); but also the pathologization of trauma (Pyscher & Lozenski, 2017), which places students in the role of lacking and needing treatment for what ails them. During the time of this study, all staff interviewed referenced specific students' traumatic homelives or adverse experiences as preventing Marbury students from performing well academically. While studies confirm the negative impact of trauma on academic achievement (Jennings, 2019; Jones & Kahn, 2017), the ways that adults talk about students can prove harmful as well. Jennings and Frank (2015),

for example, concluded personnel's underlying beliefs (and moral ethics) become visible, particularly in SEL settings.

The following examples further illustrate how despite the best intentions, deficit language persists. And accordingly, the next step in the self-awareness process and heightened reflexivity means also removing and replacing those deficit ways of thinking.

In this first example, Emma added to Rochelle's story of how trauma was ignored, and students were removed from school prior to the current principal, Ramona's arrival. She asserted,

> And I think the other piece that makes it critical is that we're teaching the child to self-regulate and not expecting the family to take care of it because sometimes that just doesn't work. So, what a lot of people I think, used to think of as well these things should be happening at home, but the reality is maybe, maybe not, but maybe the home just doesn't have the support that it needs. And so, you know, it's kind of a definition of crazy and just to keep sending them back to what may be a problem area also or make more chaotic than here. (focus group interview, lines 82-88)

Emma began by referring to self-regulation, a central tenet of SEL+ and many SEL curricula (Jones, Brush et al., 2017). She then mentioned how family and the home may not be the space for socioemotional support. An asset-based approach would ask families what works with their student and what the school can do to support, helping counter deficit viewpoints (Gorski, 2018; Love, 2019). Moreover, the language of "maybe/maybe not" observes that some homes may be better equipped or better attuned to emotions than others. Nevertheless, in response to suspensions, such tactics were more harmful because of home life according to this account. Additionally, the term "chaotic" describing some of these students' home lives and what that means is essential. Are they chaotic because they are constantly moving due to evictions, homelessness, food insecurities? According to Emma and the data provided about Marbury Elementary, many students face such challenges. Using both positive and negative language to describe the home and the school's role in providing support (where their homes are lacking), demonstrates the juxtaposing ways that administrators and teachers speak about their students and backgrounds.

In several observations during recess, I saw how teachers and staff disciplined students. One memorable incident involved a first grader, Davyon, who missed the dismissal signal and was still on the playground after his classmates returned. A fourth grader holding Davyon's hand walks up to the supervising staff member and mentions that he was still on the playground. The supervisor yanks Davyon's other hand, thanks the fourth grader and begins to berate Davyon in front of the class who was now silently watching the whole exchange. His scolding included "you never listen", "you are not allowed there anymore", and threats of future consequences when they return to class, then ordered Davyon to get inside the classroom quickly. Davyon began to sniffle and shuffled his feet to class (field notes, October 3, 2019). This incident coupled with support staff on the playground jokingly mentioning how that kid "is a runner" and "be careful with that one" all connect to punitive and deficit frameworks. As Emma stated earlier, shifting the perspective from an outward "this

is your fault" to a more reflexive and self-aware "what can I do to help" provides a more restorative SEL approach that seeks to deescalate the situation. It also can get to the root of the problem, such as finding ways to get Davyon's attention or developing a mutual buddy system so that he returns to class on time. Labeling students, even jokingly, harms and perpetuates deficit stereotypes and impedes on any cared-for approach leading to Noddings' (2005) observation that if the child feels uncared for, the carer must modify their relationship to prevent further psychological and moral harms.

DISCUSSION

Within the construct of care-for/care-about, a question arises: Who will do the same for the caregiver? The teacher cares for her students but that takes an emotional toll and brings to light what tools SEL+ provides that teachers can also use to regulate their stress (e.g., mindful breathing). With 46% of teachers reporting feeling highly stressed on the job, thinking about the ways that SEL programs can help improve teachers' self-care and not add to this stress is imperative (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Noddings' (1999) cared-for/cared-about theory speaks to the dialogical relationship necessary between the carer and cared-for which can develop their relationship and growth. In other words, it is mutually beneficial. Moving away from punitive ways of addressing students' misbehaviors while cognizant of our personal biases is imperative as we move towards more equitable and healing centered SEL programs (Ginwright, 2018). SEL+ is one such program whose implementation, though at its early stages in this school site, supports and adds to ongoing conversations on equity-minded trauma-informed SEL in schools. At its root is a care ethic for supporting students, teachers, and staff. Caregivers must build that capacity for themselves to develop that same self-awareness in their students leading to better ways of dealing with volatile emotions (Jennings, 2015; Jennings et al., 2017). Noddings (2005) describes one facet of care theory, interdependence, where the carer (teacher) must acknowledge the impact of their behaviors towards the cared-for (student). For example, when a student responds aggressively, that does not always mean the carer is solely responsible in that situation. Noddings (2002) clarifies that the "control I exercise as a carer is always a shared control [with the cared-for]" (p. 89). The relational aspect central to trauma-informed models suggests teachers need to have the administrative and professional support to work through those personal traumas to attend to their students' emotional needs as well. In this way Emma, Rochelle, Ramona and the teachers at Marbury are working towards an interdependent, caring school community and I documented the beginning of their journey in this study.

Language has a role when it comes to discussions of SEL and ways to implement it in schools, which CASEL's (2020) shifts towards equity-centered language centering social adversity and students' culture illustrates. Examples such as those in the first section of findings delineate the positive effects of SEL+ (self-awareness to deescalate) and a non-punitive approach to discipline. At the same time, the deficit language that continues to exist illuminates the challenges regardless of carers' good intentions. This case study's findings encourage us to build our capacity to discuss

ways to ensure that these methods are not merely creating another mechanism to label, police and control students' bodies (Pyscher & Compton, 2020).

CONCLUSION

As schools continue to adopt SEL practices, they must consider the impact of those practices on their practitioners. While this study is limited to observations, artifacts and three in-depth interviews conducted at one low-income urban public elementary school, as a critical case study, it demonstrates that despite horizontal and vertical support for SEL work, the emotional challenges remain. Moreover, how can SEL function as a mechanism to transform deficit narratives of families experiencing poverty to a more equitable approach? Does it place too much onus on the individual to overcome emotionally draining work and not enough on the systemic issues underlying traumatic experiences? These are all questions to consider moving forward.

Future recommendations include building the capacity and space for teachers and practitioners to engage in reflective practices. This includes journaling, mindfulness activities during staff meetings, and professional development that incorporates similar if not the same activities that would eventually be introduced and implemented with students. Teachers are central to this important work and their emotional well-being cannot and should not be ignored. Studying SEL+ as one such plan centering teachers and students in its praxis can prove helpful to SEL practitioners. Finally, teachers and administrators should decenter trauma from a child's delinquency or misbehavior, for they are not "broken" or "disturbed" (Pyscher & Lozenski, 2017). Rather, a whole-child approach moves us toward more equitable and humane ways of helping our students and ourselves.

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