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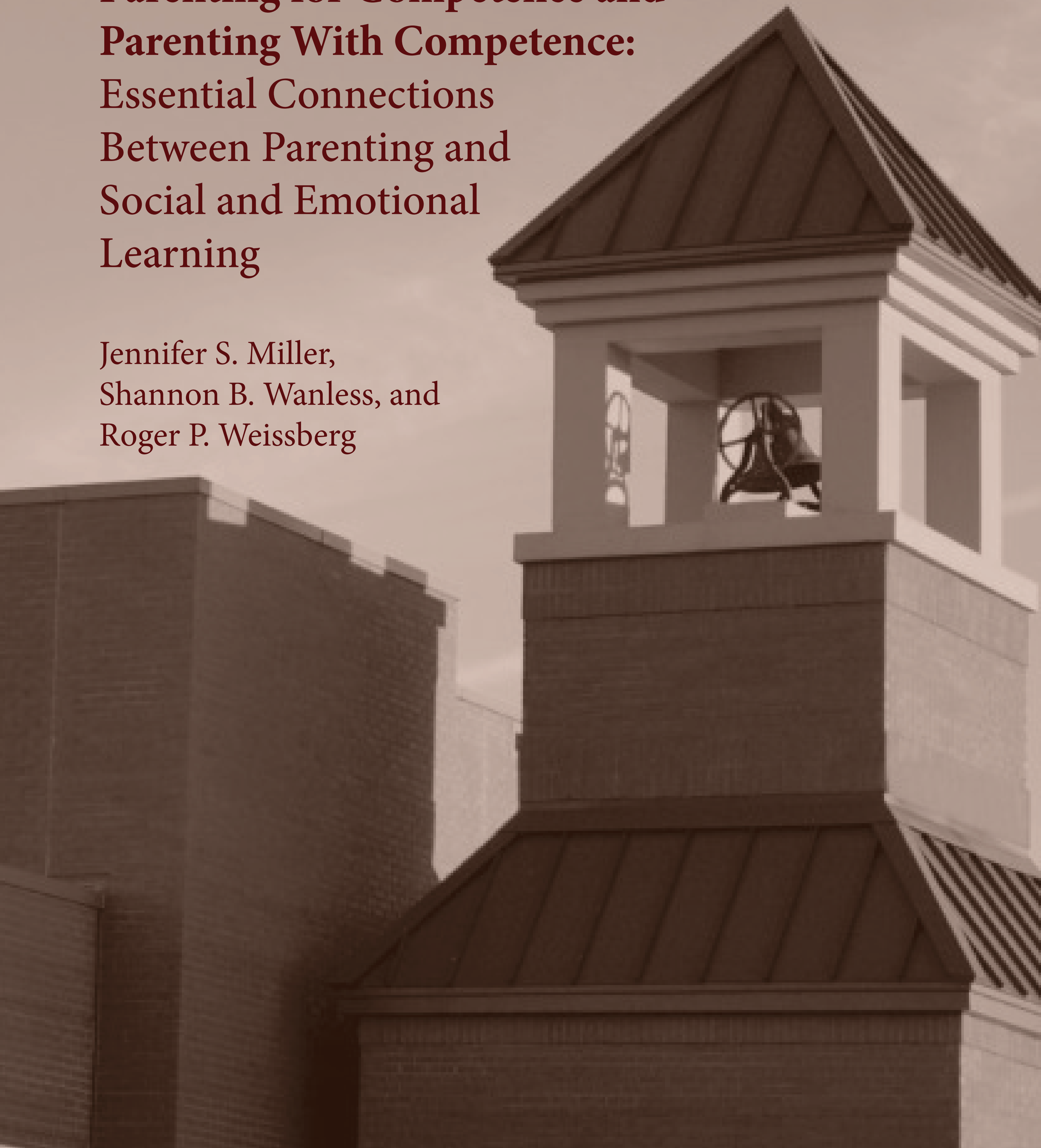

Parenting for Competence and Parenting With Competence: Essential Connections Between Parenting and Social and Emotional Learning

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Abstract

The majority of parents in the United States recognize that social and emotional skills are a high priority for their children's success (Princeton Survey Research Associates International, 2015), but most cannot readily articulate how they are utilizing or promoting these skills in their own families (Zero to Three, 2016). Even professionals in the field of social and emotional learning (SEL) may struggle in making the translation between their professional knowledge and their personal parenting practices. In the present study, we aimed to understand the connection between the scholarly field of SEL and the lived experiences of parents who engage with SEL in a practical setting. Specifically, we studied SEL professionals who were also parents to determine how they see the overlap between school-based SEL and the role of SEL in families. Survey items assessed their priorities for their children's development and their parenting. Responses were analyzed for the degree to which they aligned with a prominent SEL framework created by the Collaborative for Academic and Social and Emotional Learning. This framework has not yet been applied extensively to parenting, but results from this study suggest that even when terminology differs, underlying social and emotional priorities for children and parenting show substantial overlap. The purpose of this investigation—built upon the research base of SEL in schools—is to raise questions, offer a model for further inquiry, and draw connections between our knowledge of school-based social and emotional learning and parenting.

Key Words: parenting, social and emotional learning, competence, CASEL

Introduction

By midmorning, co-author Jennifer is deeply focused on writing, coaching, and educating parents on cultivating social and emotional skills in family life, but by late afternoon she is supplying healthy snacks, encouraging outdoor play, and supporting homework completion for her son. Meanwhile, in midmorning co-author Shannon is either teaching a child development class, advising a graduate student, or collecting data on social and emotional development in a preschool classroom, but by evening, she negotiates sibling rivalry, reads bedtime stories to her two children, and checks in about how the day went. Co-author Roger focuses on research, practice, and policy advancing school–family partnerships to enhance children's social, emotional, and academic learning—and he communicates regularly by Skype, text, and phone with his 30-year-old daughter and 26-year-old son about their work, relationships, and life challenges. While engaging in our professional contributions studying children's social and emotional development and how we can best support their success in school and life, we began to wonder: Why it is so challenging to translate this into practice with our own children each day? Specifically, we wondered how parents could use the extensive school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) research to help them in two ways: (1) develop their children's social and emotional competence, and (2) apply their own social and emotional competence in their everyday parenting practices.

According to a recent survey conducted by NBC News and Pearson Education, the majority of parents in the U.S. said the most critical skills for their children to learn are social and communication skills. These were considered even more important than teaching children to attain good grades or understand technology (Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2015). A different survey by Learning Heroes found that parents worried more about their children's emotional well-being and exposure to peer pressure day-to-day than they did about academic pressures or performance (Hart Research Associates, 2017). Indeed, research confirms that children who are more competent in social and emotional skills also enjoy greater happiness, confidence, and capacity to sustain and grow relationships (Albright & Weissberg, 2010; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Parents in the NBC News study were also asked about their skill requirements for effectiveness in parenting. In addition to prioritizing SEL for their children, they also thought SEL was important for themselves. The majority ranked patience and understanding as the skills they most needed to be successful in their own parenting practices. Although there is a growing recognition

that social and emotional skills such as these are fundamental to parents' everyday lives, there are far too few research-based resources and educational opportunities to guide them. In the present study, we aimed to extend these survey findings by examining parents' interest in SEL (for their children and for themselves) in greater depth and to consider how that interest aligns with a prominent SEL framework that has not yet been fully applied to parenting.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves acquiring and effectively applying the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to become aware of, articulate, and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, take others' perspectives while showing empathy and compassion, grow healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2015). In this article, we aim to define the scope and issues involved with parenting that may be addressed with SEL and to raise questions for advancing SEL research and practice in regards to everyday parenting. Throughout the article, we refer to "parents" and "parenting," but we consider other adults raising children (i.e., grandparents, extended family members, guardians) as "parents" as well. The framework of the Parent Development Theory offers a contemporary definition of parenting as one who combines elements of bonding or love and affection, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity, as well as sensitivity with the relative emphasis of each varying somewhat as children grow and develop from infancy through adulthood (Mowder, Rubinson, & Yasik, 2009). We also aim to emphasize that bringing school-based SEL to parents may require a much deeper consideration of cultural and racial fit than has been addressed in schools in the past. The diversity in family cultures in the U.S. is rich, yet this is just beginning to become a focus of school-based SEL (Simmons, 2017).

Rationale

Research demonstrates that when parents have access to a wide range of parenting strategies, they feel more competent in their roles and have more positive mental health (Furlong, 2013; Sanders & Woolley, 2005). This includes SEL parenting strategies and can be applied to parents from many backgrounds. As an example of this, a study of immigrant parents showed they had a greater sense of self-efficacy when they felt competent in their parenting strategies and in their ability to assist their children in the transition to living in a new culture (Klang, Glatz, & Buchanan, 2016). Cross-cultural studies reveal that ethnic pride can also enhance that sense of parents' efficacy (Hill & Tyson, 2008).

From the family science literature, there are six key factors commonly examined in research studies in order to understand parenting practices, including warmth and emotional support, monitoring, communication, psychological control, behavioral control, and parent efficacy, all of which can involve the use

of social and emotional skills (Cauce, 2008; Hill & Tyson, 2008; Huynh-Nhu et al., 2008). Because culture has been found to predict psychological control, for example, future studies on how SEL training might impact parenting practices must also examine the design and implementation of interventions through a cross-cultural lens (Hill & Tyson, 2008). In addition, ethnicity and race cannot be examined without also focusing on social class and other contextual factors (Cauce, 2008). However, in studies examining multiple cultures and varying socioeconomic levels, when parenting practices and relationships between parents and children involve coercive or inconsistent discipline or an absence of positive parenting strategies and warmth, these factors have been found to be strong predictors of children's delinquent behavior (Loeber & Dishion, 1983; Patterson, 1982; Tolan & Zelli, 1996). Further studies are required to understand how SEL-informed parenting might vary across U.S. ethnicities and minorities, in Latin America, in Eastern countries, and beyond (Chao, 1994; Coll & Pachter, 2002).

There are a number of evidence-based parenting programs using SEL strategies, such as the Triple P–Positive Parenting Program (Sanders, Kirby, Tellegen, & Day, 2014), the Incredible Years (McGilloway et al., 2012), and Parent Management Training–Oregon Model (Forgatch & Patterson, 2010). The Incredible Years, for example, has been researched and implemented with multiple cultures in the U.S. and around the world. However, their reach is limited because they most frequently target families with low incomes.

A skills promotion intervention was designed specifically for Chinese American immigrants and not only included social and emotional parenting skills training, but also cultural competence to address the cultural identification divide that can occur between children and their parents as they shape their identity in the U.S. Parent participants reported closer relationships with their children and greater feelings of competence at the conclusion of the intervention (Mowder et al., 2009).

More studies are needed to broaden the research base and make sure interventions are culturally sensitive, meeting parents' specific needs, and aligning with their family's ideals. Without access to evidence-informed parenting practices, parents may feel trapped into ways of parenting that are "all that they know," repeating patterns from their own childhood experiences while not aligning with their current authentic values, beliefs, or love for their children (Siegel & Hartzell, 2004). Giving parents access to research-based SEL information and strategies would support their efforts to raise children with strong social and emotional competence and to parent with social and emotional competence, ultimately aligning their parenting with their core values and beliefs.

It is likely that the most effective approach to explicitly connecting parenting and SEL would draw from across disciplines including education, developmental and social psychology, human and organizational change, out-of-school time, family science, and family–school–community partnerships. An emphasis on research-based SEL in schools offers an opportunity to engage students' families in an adult learning process so that all those who impact children's lives in a community are working together to advance their own social and emotional competence while promoting children's development (Miller, 2015, 2017). "When families and educators collaborate—particularly with a social and emotional learning focus—they extend opportunities for learning across contexts and model the very communication, behavior, and relationships skills they aim to teach children" (Albright & Weissberg, 2010, p. 246).

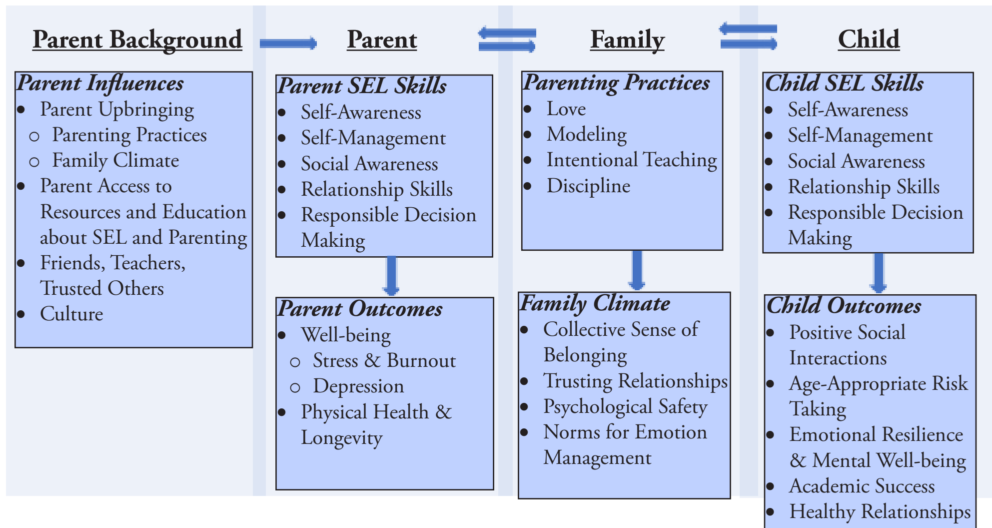

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the connections between parenting and social and emotional learning (SEL).

Based on approaches from across disciplines, we propose the conceptual model in Figure 1 which builds on related models and depicts the many points throughout the family system that are impacted by SEL (CASEL, n.d., 2015; Hall & Hord, 2001; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Roeser et al., 2013). This model suggests that parents learn their own social and emotional skills from their experiences in their families of origin and from their access to outside resources and information. In turn, parent social and emotional skills influence their own personal outcomes, as well as the parenting practices and family climate that they develop with their own children. As part of this new family system, children develop their own social and emotional skills and other related outcomes over time. Children also have an impact on the functioning

of the family system, and the family system influences the parent. Finally, it is also important to note that (although not depicted here) with families that have more than one parent, each parent brings their own background, social and emotional skills, and outcomes to the family, all of which will influence each other, adding to the complexity and richness of the family system. This conceptual model is meant as an impetus for renewed discussion and research on the essential connections between parenting and SEL and needs further refinement to stand the test of cross-cultural and cross-sociodemographic theories and research.

How a School-Based SEL Framework May Inform an Understanding of SEL's Role in Parenting

Frequently cited in school-based SEL research and practice, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has defined five areas of social and emotional competence (Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Gullotta, 2015). These are not finite temperaments but dynamic skills that can be learned through practice and reflection. All five of CASEL's social and emotional competencies are relevant for adults (e.g., teachers, parents) as well as children. First is self-awareness, or the ability to recognize and consider one's own thoughts and feelings. Self-awareness is the first step in making any kind of behavioral change. If a parent, for example, would like to change patterns of behavior from his or her own upbringing, the first step is self-awareness of those behaviors. Children also form their identity through their emerging understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

Second is social awareness: recognizing and working to understand others' thoughts and feelings. Empathy emerges from social awareness and fuels compassion, the ability to notice others' thoughts and feelings and take action to help ease their pain. A secure attachment between a parent and child in which there is an ongoing trust requires empathy (Borba, 2016). Parents' patience and understanding can be extended by learning about the developmental milestones their children are working on, because at times, challenges associated with those milestones can lead to frustrations or poor choices. Children's trusting relationships with their parents provide the confidence children need to take developmentally appropriate risks and explore their world (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

Third is self-management, which is the ability to control impulses and express emotions in socially appropriate ways that do not harm others. Self-management (or self-control, self-regulation) is a major focus for many parents, as their patience is frequently tested. Parents also want to know that their child will be able to regulate his or her desire to lash out when a peer steals his or her

toy or when the child runs away when an adult is visibly upset. There are well-documented, long-term academic and social implications of children's early self-management skills (Moffitt et al., 2010; Wanless et al., 2016), making this skill one of interest to many parents.

Practicing self-management leads directly to the fourth social and emotional competence: relationship skills. Certainly, parents must communicate in ways that will enhance their relationships with their children and will result in cooperation from their children. Meanwhile, children are learning to listen to others for information about their thoughts and feelings. This relationship skill is a main pathway to cultivating empathy and understanding. Children need to be able to assert themselves when they are hurting or have a need to be met. When they are figuring out how to negotiate with others as problems arise, collaboration is required, and academic or social success is often at stake.

Last but not least is responsible decision-making, a social and emotional skill that requires ongoing practice supported by caring adults before children can internalize it and make good choices on their own. Parents worry about not being present to guide a child who is away from home, and responsible decision-making is the skill that will help the child handle such high-risk situations. Children who make authentic choices often and experience the resulting consequences, whether perceived as positive or negative, will learn consequential thinking (Weissberg, Barton, & Shriver, 1997). Children can be offered many opportunities to make choices at home, giving parents the chance to use those choices as teachable moments. This experience becomes fundamental to their moral development and allows them to use reasoning (Rushton, 1975). It heightens their awareness of others and of the impact of their actions. In addition, parenting presents many opportunities for adults to exercise their own responsible decision-making skills as they wrestle with difficult questions such as whether to let a child attend a slumber party if they do not know the other parents. Another example might be whether to make sure their child finishes his or her homework or let the child experience the consequences of not completing it. In fact, many of these opportunities occur in front of children, allowing parents to model this difficult core competence.

Parenting for Competence: Parents' Use of SEL in Their Parenting Practices

Social and emotional competencies are critical for effective parenting. Balancing warmth with firmness, managing one's emotions when challenging situations arise, and making decisions about when and how to intervene in difficult situations are all examples of parenting moments that necessitate adult social and emotional competence. Even when children are very young,

opportunities to promote SEL are often ill-timed, presenting themselves when stress is high, and as a result, children behave or make decisions that may not successfully resolve the issue (Shafer, Wanless, & Briggs, 2017). These actions, such as having a tantrum or saying something cruel to a parent, may be as uncomfortable for the child as for the parent but are a critical part of learning and development (Wanless, 2016). Deciding how to react when harm has been done can be among the most challenging and complex issues for any caregiver, but can, if done with care and skill, increase a child's ability to face discomfort and internalize SEL lessons. Some would describe a parent's response in these moments as their approach to social and emotional development, and others would describe it as their approach to discipline. Either way, these moments can test even the most experienced caregivers and have long-term implications for both the parent and child. In fact, a national parent survey by Zero to Three (2016) revealed that 57% of parents reported struggling to figure out the most effective way to discipline.

Of the three primary styles of parenting—permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative—the authoritative style (kind and firm) is the only one that promotes skill-building and turns misbehaviors into "teaching moments" (Baumrind, 1966). In contrast, the permissive, allowing style does not seek to provide boundaries or reflection when kids have caused harm. The authoritarian style uses punishment to instill fear in the child with the intention of impressing upon him or her the lesson to be taught, but though it may stop the behavior in the moment, it leads to negative outcomes over time. Extensive research shows that harsh punishment does not teach the lesson intended but does convey that fear motivates and that force and coercion are necessary in order to influence behavior, leading to long-term outcomes such as aggression, depression, and anxiety (Baumrind, 1966).

As an example of harsh discipline, Child Trends noted that 94% of parents of three- and four-year-olds surveyed a decade ago were using spanking as a disciplinary measure (Child Trends Databank, 2015). According to a nationally representative survey in the late nineties, 76% of men and 65% of women 18- to 65-years old agreed that a child sometimes needs a "good hard spanking" (Straus & Stewart, 1999). Although the trend is decreasing over time, the majority of U.S. parents still spank their children. Using physical force, such as spanking, however, is ineffective. In fact, a recent meta-analysis of five decades of research conclusively showed that spanking a child results in short-term negative outcomes like aggression and defiance and long-term outcomes like substance abuse (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). Other harsh discipline strategies such as physical or emotional neglect (e.g., ignoring, stonewalling, passive aggressive silent treatment, hypercriticizing with the absence of support

and love) result in similar outcomes for children including anxiety, depression, and making dangerously high-risk choices (Gottman, 1997). By offering parents access to resources and information about authoritative parenting practices, which heavily relies on parents' honing their own social and emotional skills, parenting practices could align more closely with the unconditional love that parents feel for their children.

Parenting With Competence: Parents' Own Social and Emotional Skills

The research also indicates that there are important adult well-being outcomes affecting the whole family that are derived from a focus on SEL in home life. A body of research now suggests that parents' confidence in supporting their children's social and emotional development is a more significant factor in parents' long-term physical health and longevity than income level. Although previously poverty was often cited as the culprit of long-term health problems for parents, now the SEL parenting education and support provided to parents supersedes that set of risk factors (Marmot, 2016). Michael Marmot, President of the World Medical Association, claims,

> My research, and that of other scientists, points the finger at social and psychological disempowerment, a personal sense of marginalization in society, as a factor with greater effect than lack of money alone. When people feel deprived relative to those around them, stress rises, and then health suffers. Fortunately, the research also indicates that interventions with parents—improving parenting skills, for example—profoundly empowers their children. This, in turn, appears tied to a lifetime of better health. (2016, para. 4)

As has been seen in the school-based SEL literature, adult social and emotional skills may matter for implementing practices that support child SEL (Wanless, Rimm-Kaufman, Abry, Larson, & Patton, 2015). In fact, recent research points to promising interventions that may promote adult social and emotional skills (Rimm-Kaufman, Leis, & Paxton, 2014). There are also clear benefits from enhanced parenting skills in promoting mental health in both parents and their children (Angley, Divney, Magriples, & Kershaw, 2015; Bornstein, 2013). Parents' sense of self-efficacy can serve as a significant protective factor when children face higher risks including experiencing a low socioeconomic status, substance use/abuse, bullying, or school disengagement (Baum & Forehand, 1981; Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992), and even trauma (Siegel & Hartzell, 2004). Not only does research indicate that there are substantial opportunities for any parent in receiving education and support in improving their physical and mental health outcomes, but also this becomes

a critical consideration when supporting equity in schools and working with families from low-income populations.

In the present study, we examine the overlap between the way parents who are SEL experts think about SEL for their own parenting and their children's development. We also take a close look at the words they use in their home life to consider how parenting and SEL terminology may align. Specifically, we had two research questions: (1) How do parents describe the importance of social and emotional competence in their children's development? (2) How do parents describe the importance of social and emotional competence in their vision of ideal parenting?

Methods

Participants

To get specific information about how parents thought SEL played a role in their daily lives, we sent an online questionnaire to our professional SEL networks. Of the 110 respondents, 96 were parents, and we used that subset for these analyses. Of the 96 parent respondents, 78% reported having a professional role that related to the SEL field. It is important to note, however, that since this questionnaire was initially distributed through our professional networks to colleagues in the SEL field, it is possible that the remaining 22% of parents still either worked in a related field or had a strong interest in SEL. In fact, many who did not report working in an SEL field listed roles—such as afterschool care provider or graduate student researcher—which may have also been related to SEL. Of those parents who reported having a professional role in the SEL field, their roles included 17% researchers, 17% prekindergarten–twelth grade educators, 12% professional development trainers, 8% higher education educators, and the remaining were program developers, directors, school psychologists, and therapists.

Parents in the sample were currently living in the United States and reported having one (27%), two (50%), three (14%), or four (9%) children, with almost half of the sample (49%) not responding to this item. Their children ranged in age from newborn to 2 years (14%), 3 to 5 years (21%), 6 to 12 years (36%), 13 to 15 years (18%), 16 to 18 years (11%), and older (36%).

One limitation to our data collection is the limited demographic information on participants. Although this makes it difficult to determine to whom we can generalize our findings, it is likely that social and emotional experts in our sample may reflect the larger field in the U.S., which is primarily Caucasian. Based on our argument that cultural, racial, and ethnic background plays a large role in understanding parenting, it is important that future studies attend

more closely to the demographics of participants and implications for interpreting results.

Measure

The questionnaire included six demographic items and 10 items about parenting and SEL. The parenting and SEL items were created for this study based on our research questions. First, to understand how SEL fit with participants' aspirations for their children's development, we asked, "Think about the kind of adult you want your child(ren) to grow up to be. Please list five words that describe this kind of adult." We also asked, "Imagine that it is the end of the school year, and you overhear your child's current teacher talking to your child's future teacher. What five words do you hope they use to describe your child?" Words listed in response to both questions were used to ascertain how central SEL was to parents' goals for their children. For our second research question, we asked three questions, including: "Think about the kind of parent that you would like to be. Please list five words to describe that ideal."; "Think about how your parents raised you. List three aspects of their parenting that you appreciated most."; and "Keep thinking about how your parents raised you. List three aspects of their parenting that you wish could have been different." Finally, to inform our own understanding of the intersection of SEL and parenting, we asked parents which parenting moments have placed a high demand on their social and emotional competence and their child's social and emotional competence, where they seek support for parenting challenges, and how much they think SEL matters for parenting. Responses were read, listed, and grouped, maintaining participants' terminology. Frequencies and alignments with the CASEL terminology were examined.

Results and Discussion

Aligning with previous research, our survey respondents suggested that social and emotional skills were among parents' top priorities for their children to develop and to utilize themselves to be the kind of caregiver they wanted to be (Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2015). In fact, 95% felt that social and emotional skills were "very important" to parenting. Unique to our study, many of those parent respondents are also working as professionals who are contributing to advancing SEL in schools, but only a few said they utilized that professional knowledge in their parenting. Instead, most turned to a friend, spouse, or their mom for parenting advice. Next in popularity, they noted that they turned to blogs, books, articles, and counseling for support. Although it is important to note that this is not a random sample of parents, so these results

do not represent all parents, the findings suggest that even professionals in this field are often not connecting SEL research to their parenting practices.

These findings offer an initial signal that we may need to pay more attention to the ways that social and emotional skills play a role in parenting. They also indicate that the complexities of figuring out how the research and practice of SEL in schools translates into the context of family life may be a barrier for knowledgeable parents in applying SEL practices at home.

Parents clearly believed social and emotional skills were important for their children, but we also wanted to know exactly what that meant to them. Without assuming that CASEL's (2015) framework of the five social and emotional skills would apply to them, we wanted to let their own words surface. So, we asked parents to describe, in general, what kind of adults they hoped their children would grow up to be. They used the following words, listed from most to least frequent, including: happy, caring, kind, loving, confident, independent, empathetic, compassionate, responsible, fulfilled, and resilient. From this list, it is clear that even parents with connections to an SEL-related profession do not use the same terms that many scholars use in the SEL field. A conceptual overlap with CASEL's framework of five core social and emotional skills, however, is evident. *Happy*, the most commonly mentioned descriptor, and *fulfilled* both align with CASEL's first skill: self-awareness. CASEL defines self-awareness as recognizing one's emotions, thoughts, strengths, limitations, and feeling a strong sense of confidence and optimism. Other parent priorities also aligned with CASEL's framework. In fact, their top responses touched on all five of CASEL's categories (see Table 1). Not only do parents seem to prioritize the social and emotional skills that scholars are interested in investigating and promoting in schools, they also seem interested in the same breadth of skills, thus extending our understanding of the essential linkages between parenting and SEL. This alignment, although not exact, may suggest that scholars and parents agree on the skills children require. However, they may not be aware of the alignment because they are using different terminology. Language, a gateway to any cultural knowledge, is important to notice and take into account when these groups try to communicate with one another—or even when a parent tries to take information from their work and apply it to their family. This finding suggests that the discrepancy between scholarly jargon and parent terminology may give the impression of a larger disconnect than is actually present. This is good news because it means that the possibility of drawing on previous SEL research largely conducted in schools is a viable start to informing new directions in SEL and parenting research.

Table 1. Alignment Among CASEL's Five Social and Emotional Competencies and Words Parents Use Most Commonly to Describe Their Ideals for Their Children and Their Parenting

Most common words used by parents to describe their ideals for their children	%	CASEL Social and Emotional Competencies	Most common words used by parents to describe their ideals for their parenting	%
Happy, Fulfilled	12	Self-Awareness	Happy	4
Confident, Independent, Resilient	27	Self-Management	Patient, Consistent	17
Empathetic	4	Social Awareness	Encouraging, Understanding	13
Caring, Kind, Loving, Compassionate	31	Relationship Skills	Loving, Supportive, Nurturing, Fun, Kind, Caring, Compassionate	40
Responsible	22	Responsible Decision Making	Provider, High Expectations, Honest	18
	$N = 96$			$N = 92$

Not only were CASEL's five social and emotional skills applicable to talking about the kind of adults they hoped their children would become, they were also relevant for describing the parenting practices that participants hoped to espouse. Although they used different words, moms and dads in our sample said they wanted to parent in a way that required a high level of social and emotional competence, extending our understanding of necessary parenting skills found in previous studies (Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2015). We asked those surveyed to describe the types of parents they wanted to be and aspects of their own parents' parenting that they felt were assets. When looking at these responses together to determine parents' descriptors of ideal parenting, some common words (listed from most to least frequently mentioned) included: loving, supportive, patient, consistent, nurturing, fun, encouraging, kind, provider, caring, having high expectations, honest, compassionate, understanding, and happy. *Loving* was by far the most commonly mentioned response, and we see this as relating to CASEL's relationship skills which they define as being able to maintain and grow healthy relationships with many types of people, including dealing with challenges in those relationships that are likely to occur. It was noteworthy, as in their desires for their children, parents' descriptions of ideal parenting had substantial overlap with all five of CASEL's social and emotional skills. In both instances, parents seemed to highly value relationship skills for their children and for themselves. This points to

a call for a greater focus on research, training, and support across all five skill areas with a particular emphasis on relationship skills.

Although not all parents may aim to act in the same ways, there were many parenting moments described by our participants that necessitated social and emotional skills and may represent times that parents need support to reach their parenting goals. Again, these moments crossed the entire range of CASEL's five social and emotional skills, enabling us to extend the traditionally school-based model to our understanding of parenting practices. The survey respondents provided examples of parenting moments that they viewed as challenges. Those challenges ranged from managing a tired and upset toddler to responding to a school-age son who was caught lying to dealing with unhealthy weight perceptions and habits with a teenage daughter. Often, these issues involved promoting a social and emotional skill (or skills) in a child, such as self-awareness and self-management with the overwrought toddler. Simultaneously, those challenges required social and emotional skills of the parent in order to manage the situation, such as self-management (e.g., to control anger and show patience), relationships skills (e.g., communicating with the child in ways to help him understand that lying is destructive) and responsible decision-making (e.g., figuring out how to teach the lesson that trust is essential in a relationship). As we move forward in thinking about how to use the SEL knowledge base to support parents, there are certain parenting moments that seem prime for helping parents to promote social and emotional skills in their children. Across these moments, it is clear that when parents return to calm and have the chance to reflect on their most challenging times, they can respond to their children in ways that teach fundamental social and emotional skills in authentic circumstances.

As we read through parents' challenging moments, it became clear that although parents listed relationship skills most often in their descriptions of ideal parenting, their challenges around responsible decision-making, in particular, were much more complex than what we often see in the school-based literature on SEL. The specific challenge examples parents provided revealed a much larger set of responsibilities (compared with teachers) to convey values, beliefs, and morals to their children across an ever-changing developmental landscape, providing guidance for the multiple settings and relationships children encounter in addition to home life. Their children face very different decisions from infancy, toddlerhood, preschool, middle childhood, adolescence, and then emerging adulthood, all with unique developmental complexities and challenges. Unlike teachers, parents are present for that entire developmental pathway and need to be ready to navigate those changes and complications with their children, while dealing with their own feelings around change, loss,

and identity. Those varied complexities may offer areas in advancing the field of SEL in parenting that will require further attention in research, training, and support.

Additionally, we asked respondents to consider specific day-to-day moments in which they felt they were able to—in some way, however small—promote or facilitate their children's social and emotional development. The responses we received were widely diverse and highlighted at least one of each of the five social and emotional competencies. Whether it was guiding a child to deep breathing and calming down when upset, recognizing the positive contributions a child makes to family life, or facilitating problem-solving instead of providing solutions, parents articulated the everyday, mundane moments of life in their roles and how they could see that their words or actions were promoting social and emotional skills. The range of examples provided reinforce the notion that there can be numerous chances in any given day to advance a child's social and emotional skill-building if parents become aware of those opportune times and seize them.

Next Steps in Leveraging Existing SEL Research to Support Parents

Social and emotional skills clearly matter in raising children. In our survey, however, 93% of respondents thought parents needed "a fair amount" or "a lot more" support than they were currently getting to learn social and emotional skills. So, what kinds of supports are needed in order for parents to define a new path based on their values and in alignment with building a social and emotional skill set? The field of SEL includes a growing body of literature on human change, organizational change, and implementation science that has led to many lessons about how to best support teachers and schools that are developing their SEL competence and strategies (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). As we move forward in supporting parents, it may also be useful to draw from the SEL literature to consider how to best offer supports, coaching, assistance, and modeling that will help parents with this transformation. Parenting is a deeply personal experience, as is (but perhaps even more so than) teaching, that integrates the heart and head. Any supports for parents must include a sensitivity to the highly personal nature of change and the variable ways that families can create positive environments for their children to develop. Further research on SEL in diverse family settings is needed to test the bounds of lessons from SEL research in schools when applied at home.

Our survey findings raise a number of questions for parents, researchers, and practitioners. Considering these as described below may help the field focus on critical issues for advancing understanding of the essential connections between parenting and SEL.

Bridging Fields

Our findings raise the following questions and point to the following areas as ripe and ready for further investigation and development:

- How can those advancing the research and practice of SEL bring their knowledge and findings from schools to support parents, while recognizing the unique aspects of parenting and using relatable terms?
- How can new communication channels be developed that link parents and SEL experts?
- How do SEL researchers and practitioners who are interested in supporting parents reach parenting educators to share knowledge?
- How can we better understand the extent to which parent–teacher or parent–school relationships include social and emotional topics, such as whether a child is feeling safe and cared for at school or whether a child feels he is capable of achieving the learning goals set for him?
- How can we use the support of children's social and emotional development as the common ground and shared knowledge from which to build deeper collaborations between school, family, and community partners?

Appreciating the Diversity of Parenting Approaches

After our review of the cross-cultural literature on parenting and connections with social and emotional learning, there is much to learn and explore moving forward:

- How can SEL researchers and practitioners learn from the diverse range of rich cultural backgrounds of parents to inform how we support parents and, in turn, use that information to better support the diverse range of teachers and classrooms?
- Rather than conceptualizing one model of best practice and adapting it to local contexts (as is often the model in school-based SEL), how can we honor the many different ways to embody "best practices" in parenting?

Supporting Parents in the Process of Human Change

If indeed this investigation is a call to action to the fields of school-based social and emotional learning and family science, then the following questions are paramount in understanding how to translate research to practice:

- What resources and supports can be developed to reach a wide range of parents in developing their own social and emotional competencies?
- Pattern or habit changes in parenting (or any human behavior) can be difficult and uncomfortable. With that in mind, (a) how can we raise awareness of the need for SEL for both children and parents, and (b) how do we help them engage in the potentially uncomfortable process of developing new skills?

In conclusion, there is a significant need and opportunity for improving supports for parents by building upon the well-established body of research and practice in the field of SEL. This was evident in data collected from parents with a connection to an SEL-related profession, and thus must be even more so for other parents. Improving these supports will require contributions from all partners including funders creating new streams of resources to allow for lines of inquiry into this issue. By describing the connections between existing SEL terminology and parent voices, we aim to provide a call to action to instigate further dialogue, asking questions and investigating how we can bridge the gap between our knowledge of SEL in schools and the world of parenting. With this survey and exploration of the need for SEL in parenting, it has become clear that there are numerous connections yet to be made between our parenting, our hearts and passions for our children and our professions, and our minds devoted to education and research.

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