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**A BEFORE-SCHOOL COUNSELOR INTERVENTION THAT PROMOTES
PEER RELATIONAL SKILLS AND INFLUENCES PROSOCIAL
BEHAVIOR**

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Counselor Education

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated, first and foremost, to my family. My husband Wally, my partner of twenty years, who has supported me as I further my education. He has helped me to always see the bigger picture and the light at the end of the tunnel throughout this adventure. I appreciate his council and companionship as well as his ability to make me laugh.

To my children, Jackson and Brynn, who have endured the countless hours of mom just “finishing this up”. They have been immensely patient and tolerant of my absence while I spent time in front of the computer screen or in class. Jackson is one of the kindest, thoughtful and funniest children that I know. And as I tell them, I know a lot of kids. Brynn is sweet, loving, and creative. I am so fortunate to be their mother.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to understand the student experience and perception of change after participating in a before-school counselor intervention focused on learning prosocial behaviors and developing peer relational skills. This evaluation included both how students experienced the program and if they perceived any change in themselves after participating in the program. Qualitative methods are often used in evaluations because they tell the program's story by capturing and communicating the participant's stories (Patton, 2003, p. 2). The purpose of this type of method was to illuminate the process and outcomes of a program. The intent of qualitative findings was to deepen understanding through the eyes of the participants or to "put faces on the statistics to deepen understanding" (Patton, 2003, p. 2).

In order to understand the student experience and perception of change, the researcher interviewed eight students who participated in a 12-week before-school program. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Analysis of the data

resulted in six separate findings. To summarize, the students found the before-school program to be a positive experience where they learned how to make friends more effectively, they felt good about helping others, and they found it difficult to cooperate on a consistent basis. Students evaluated the program as being fun and they spoke about 38 of the 52 activities. The bulk of the program evaluation centered unanimously around four specific activities. And each individual student came away from the 12 week program gaining a personally meaningful and unique skill.

This study provided a qualitative evaluation of student perception of a before-school program. These findings are useful for school administrators, superintendents, and school counselors because they provide an understanding of the student experiences of change in group counseling which occurred before-school. This data can be used to support the value of group work outside of the traditional day. This program can be used to provide a model of psychoeducational prevention work to students when time for counseling groups in elementary school is becoming increasingly scarce.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

School counselors are charged with many responsibilities outlined by the American School Counselor Association's School Counselor Competencies (2012). It is incumbent upon school counselors and counselor educators to consider the ASCA competencies when creating programming for their schools. School counselors must "plan, organize, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive, developmental, results-based school counseling program" (American School Counselor Association, 2012, p. 1). Research that focuses on the implementation of social-emotional and academic innovations falls under the professional responsibilities of the school counselor. Elias (1994) elucidated the need for school-based professionals to implement innovative prevention programs. This includes an intensive and extensive recording of the practice. The recording would detail how the programs operate under real-world environments of the school (Elias, 1994). This type of documented and empirically based practice will help professional school counselors determine how to better meet the needs of the students in their schools.

Leaders in counselor education are urging school counselors to expand their roles to include leadership, reform, advocacy, and social justice (ASCA, 2012; Bemak, 2000; Dahir, 2004; Datnow, 2012; Dollarhide, 2003; Dollarhide & Gibson, 2008; Portman, 2009; Singh et al., 2010; Sink & Edwards, 2008). To prove our efficacy and our necessity in the school environment, school counselors must take leadership roles in not only designing and implementing programming but empirically researching the programs. If found to be efficacious, school counselors must promote their work and let the public and

education leaders know that school counseling does make a difference in the lives of children.

This study was conceived with these issues in mind. To develop a solution, first there must be an understanding of intervention work. There also must be a knowledge of what skills are developmentally appropriate to be used in the prevention of social difficulties. Finally, there must be an appreciation for alternative solutions that are possible for school counselors to access students, without taking them away from their class time.

This study was informed by previous research as well as by the researchers' own experience as a school counselor. Qualitative methods were employed to understand the student experience of a new before-school program that was designed to be preventative using the constructs of prosocial behavior and peer relational skills. These constructs were carefully considered and are widely researched in counseling and psychology.

Existing research has proven that interventions that teach students prosocial skills and behaviors are effective (Baillargeon et al., 2001; Battistich, Solomon, & Watson, 1997; Carlo & Randall, 2002; Choi, Johnson, & Johnson, 2011; Dovidio et al., 2006; Durlak & Wells, 1997; Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Durlak et al., 2011; Epps et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2013; Solomon et al., 1988; and Zentall, Craig, & Kuester, 2011). Research also has found evidence to support interventions that decrease peer problems within the school environment (Battistich, Solomon, Delucchi, 1993; Becky & Farren, 1997; Carlson, 1999; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2012; Hawkins et al., 1999; Hoffman, 1994; Resnick et al., 1997; Walton et al., 2012; and Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997). And

while these concepts are not new, school counselors continue to have trouble implementing interventions for students.

This program addressed the needs of students within the school community by providing them with an environment where they can work on their interpersonal skills, problem solving, and team building. This program attempted to tackle the ongoing social issues that children face in the school environment. One goal was for the students to learn social skills and to solve problems creatively.

This study examined the student experiences and perceptions of change in a before-school counseling intervention at an elementary school in New Mexico. The study evaluated an innovative, 12-week before-school program (Appendix A) that was designed to increase prosocial behaviors by focusing on social skills and decrease peer relational problems through practicing cooperation through team-building activities and a community service project. The participants were students in Grades 3-5, ages 8-11.

Evaluation research methods were employed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Evaluation is a form of social science research that studies the effectiveness of existing knowledge used to inform practical action (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). Data was collected via the students from interviews (lived experiences of the program) at the conclusion of the intervention.

Chapter 1 is organized in the following sections: (a) theoretical framework, (b) statement of the problem, (c) purpose of the study, (d) significance of the study, and (e) limitations of the study.

Theoretical Framework

In Carl Rogers' (1994) seminal work, *Freedom to Learn*, relationships, or interpersonal relationships, as he termed them, are crucial for the facilitation of learning between teacher and student. Rogers also discussed healthy learning environments, including the interrelationships between teachers and the other members of a school. "Healthy schools have a very strong sense of partnership and community among all their members" (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994, p. 162).

Understanding the theoretical tenets of person-centered counseling and teaching provided a philosophical grounding for the researcher. This intervention was conducted by the researcher within the person-centered theoretical paradigm. Modeling person-centered behavior (unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence) was as important as the actual intervention. Tauch (2011) believed that person-centered communication and behavior are the cornerstones of promoting well-being and personal growth in others. The person-centered approach (PCA) transcends the therapeutic milieu and was effective in building relationships with the students, their parents, and the other individuals within the school environment.

PCA is an orientation focused on empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness (or congruence) of the helping professional (Cornelius-White, 2005). This approach is used in counseling and educational settings. A meta-analysis of 24 studies that explored research that included 10,000 students found that the person-centered foci have more of a beneficial effect than any other intervention in educational research. This meta-analysis looked at instructional effectiveness and found an effect size of 1.17 (Cornelius-White, 2005). This large-scale study adds to the significance of using school-based humanistic interventions.

Interpersonal relationships mediate the other potential conditions of elementary school children. Humanistic paradigms complement the efforts of school counselors

trained in the developmental needs of children. Specifically, school counselors who believe in the actualizing tendency for their students regardless of background or ability status and use empathy and unconditional positive regard to work through their developmental challenges are employing humanistic interventions. The constructs that have been identified for intervention and research that both aid in the development of interpersonal relationships are prosocial behaviors and peer relational skills.

Peer relational skills include such things as getting along with peers or classmates, being well liked, being thoughtful, and understanding the feelings and perspectives of others—all of which represent more than an absence of problems but a way of interacting with peers and adults (Epps, Park, Huston, & Ripke, 2005). Peer relational problems were worked on through an emphasis on friendship and on learning cooperative learning in groups and community service. Prosocial behavior has been defined as any action on behalf of someone else that may involve a cost to the helper (Hoffman, 1994). Prosocial behaviors were emphasized by learning and experiencing the concepts of empathy, kindness, and being helpful.

Using the leadership and advocacy skills recommended by the American School Counselors Association (2012) National Model, the intervention was focused on preventative efforts. Personal/social skills are one of the three areas for school counselors to focus on, and group counseling is part of the direct counseling expectation. It is incumbent on counseling professionals, understanding the importance of relational skills, to use their expertise with such endeavors.

Statement of the Problem

A number of issues cause problems for school counselors as they attempt to provide preventative services to their students. Problems include time, lack of support, the shift away from counselors being able to provide direct services to students, large caseloads, and the specific concerns of being a school counselor in New Mexico.

Currently, school counselors are finding it difficult to include meaningful interventions within the school day, due to the demands of the student's time with academics and testing (Clark & Breman, 2009). Teachers often are unwilling to allow their students to leave class or school staff suggest that school counselors work with the students during "noninstructional" time, such as during recess, physical education, music, and art or computer sessions (Clark & Breman, 2009, p. 7). Thus, students are not given the opportunity to receive proactive counseling to improve prosocial skills and to minimize peer relational problems.

Studies have found that a lack of teacher and administrative support and resistance to allowing students to attend group counseling are common impediments (Carroll, 1985; Dansby, 1996; Steen et al., 2007). Researchers have found many barriers that prevent effective group work in schools. Some of the obstructive forces described are scheduling problems, teacher resistance, school policies and practices that limit student access, and the overall culture of schools (Dansby, 1996; Greenberg, 2003; Ripley & Goodnough, 2001). Other issues are the unwillingness or apathy for the school system to change. Although schools claim they need and want preventative programming within their counseling programs, they are not supported by time or resources (Napierkowski & Parson, 1995).

School counseling organizations now are seeing a movement away from school counselors who provide counseling services (Whiston, 2004). Astramovich, Hoskins, and Bartlett (2010) have recognized a significant gap in the provision of individual and small-group counseling services to students in school settings. The solution at some schools to reduce this gap is to have community-based mental health professional's contract with the schools to provide counseling services to students (Brown, Dahlbeck, & Sparkman-Barnes, 2006). Unfortunately, due to the extra duties and focus on vocational guidance

for school counselors, these contracted counseling services are necessary (Astramovich, Hoskins, & Bartlett, 2010).

School counselors nationwide grapple with many of these issues. However, these issues are compounded by the fact that New Mexico lacks the resources of many states. The 2005 New Mexico Comprehensive School Counseling Program Guide details the need for professional school counselors to provide direct services to all students in the hopes of reducing the number of students who need crisis intervention. Clearly, insufficient student access to school counselors is an issue within New Mexico schools. In the 2001-2002 school year, New Mexico's student-to-counselor ratio was 378:1 (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2005). A report from the New Mexico's Public Education Department acknowledged the staggering increase in the school student-to-counselor ratio. The rate increased to 420:1 in 2003-2004, to 456:1 in the 2006-2007 school year, and in 2009 to 567:1 (Adams, Montoya-Baker, & Bunkero, 2009). In the district in which the study took place, the ratio is 7,595 students to 9.69 counselors (the number is based on contract time) or 783:1 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015).

This district is the third largest in New Mexico. The study took place in a school with an enrollment of 876 students as of October 2013. According to the district statistics, 11.6% of this school's students receive special education services, and 43% receive free lunch or a reduced-rate lunch. The race and ethnicity breakdown is 45.3% Hispanic, 41.2% Caucasian, 4.1% African-American, 4.5% American Indian, and 4.9% Asian American.

Student-to-teacher ratio and higher poverty levels are not the only issues for school counselors. In 2009, New Mexico was considered to be in the beginning stages of school counseling models (Martin, Carey, & DeCoster, 2009). This means that New Mexico schools had only one to three of the features of established school counseling models used influence local implementation. School counseling models are meant to facilitate good practice. Those features include a written model, modern model features, model endorsement, links to career planning, school counseling leadership, supportive legislation, supportive licensure and accreditation, professional development, and model evaluation (Martin, Carey, & DeCoster, 2009). The importance of having strong state-level leadership is vital for developing effective programs in school counseling (Gysbers, 2006). Such leadership allows for collaboration, gives the public a greater understanding of the role of the school counselor, enables effective programs to be implemented, and gives counselors a voice in educational reform (Gysbers, 2006). New Mexico is one of only 10 states whose model implementation of school counseling is considered to be in the beginning stages. This means school counselors in New Mexico must contend with all of the national problems of reaching their student populations as well as the problems at the local level of poverty and lack of resources in the form of trained school counselors.

The goal for the New Mexico School Counseling Association is to focus on outcome results and to adapt and change to the needs of the students. The intent of this study was to meet those needs in part by providing direct, preventative services for elementary students. Understanding the problems that school counselor's face was an important step in finding viable solutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the student experience and perception of change after participating in before-school counselor intervention focused on learning prosocial behaviors and developing peer relational skills. One goal of this study was to provide alternative means to support children in school. Specifically, the benefits to the participants in this study are aligned with the school's vision by promoting effective communication and developing mutual respect and personal responsibility while contributing to a positive school culture. Another goal of the study was to discover how the findings can help school counselors to implement alternative programming to serve students. This work with students outside of the traditional school day was conducted during a time that did not interrupt their academic endeavors. Using a qualitative evaluation methodology allows for a clearer understanding of the efficacy of the program and the experiences of the participating children. A larger goal for this study was to add to the overall research about programs within the school environment. As educators, we are invested in finding ways to help children become successful in school and in life.

With all of these considerations in mind, a preliminary research question was determined: How are the lived experiences of the students changed by going through the intervention? This research question was intentionally broad. The concept of change being both nominal (yes or no) and measured by degree based on the perception of the children to voice their understanding of the meaning and depth of change, if it occurred.

Significance of the Study

This study was distinctive for the following reasons: it was innovative due the length of time (45 minutes every day) and duration (12 weeks) of a school counselor study. It was conducted during out-of-school time (before school). The program focused on prosocial and relational constructs that have the potential to impact behavioral issues and well-being along with other proximal effects. And the construction, implementation, and evaluation of this program were conducted by a school counselor.

Students benefited from this program because it was no cost, before-school, and led by a trained school counselor. The premise was that starting the school day with positive interactions and training in social skills likely would make for a better experience during school. School counseling interventions tend to be particularly efficacious in two ways: They reduce discipline referrals and increase students' problem-solving behaviors (Whiston, Eder, Rahardja, & Tai, 2007).

School counseling is an area in need of more research and leadership efforts within the schools as well as within the school districts that review programming. Students had the opportunity to learn social skills and to participate in cooperative activities that promoted prosocial (helping) behaviors. The 12-week, before-school program was unique and could benefit students and schools without taking away time from the students' academic endeavors.

Literature about school counselors notes there is an increased emphasis on high academic achievement goals for students (Clark & Amatea, 2004) and its effects on teachers and school counselors. Accountability measures and academic standards have become part of the conversation for all members of the school community, including

school counselors. And because personal and social problems lead to issues in the classroom, which is a situation that impacts academic scores, educators now are more involved (Clark & Amatea, 2004). School leaders now see the benefits of improving prosocial skills and of decreasing peer relational problems.

In general, there are protective factors associated with out-of-school activities. Some of the protective factors include providing support in nonacademic areas, connecting to a positive peer group through school-sponsored activities, and providing adult supervision (Opinas & Horne, 2006). All of these protective factors are accounted for in this study, because it was nonacademic, included positive peer support, was endorsed by the school, and was supervised by an adult.

To elucidate the student experiences, qualitative methodology was employed. Evaluation research is a valuable tool in assessing interventions. Good evaluation research should inform practice and not just be a summary of the past, should be collaborative, should work from participants' perceptions of good practice, and should enhance learning (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Some noted advantages of the evaluation method are that it allows for feedback, provides an environment that facilitates change, has an emphasis on positive as well as poor practice, and there are opportunities for the participants to have a voice in the evaluation process (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). This type of methodology in school counseling research is uncommon and therefore is distinctive in the field.

Limitations of the Study

The potential limitations of this study were the following. First, the researcher also was the person conducting the intervention. This field research is common among

qualitative studies. However, it was important to evaluate all findings with a critical lens. Another potential limitation was that out-of-school activities can interfere with students' homework completion. There was a potential for families to be concerned that participation might detract from time at home or from doing homework before school. Fortunately, that did not appear to be a concern for the families who participated.

Also, the generalizability of the research may be limited due to a small number of participants ($n = 8$) from one elementary school. Results included thick description and participant quotes to provide context for the student experience, which may allow for greater transferability across students and settings. This transferability is incumbent upon the reader to determine if it is applicable to their setting.

Limitations are a part of any study. It was the researcher's responsibility to have countermeasures to make those limitations clear and to resolve as many as possible. This began with conscious attention to detail, peer checking, understanding previous research, audit checks, and using many data points to arrive at conclusions.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter begins with a discussion of the researcher's implementation of the person-centered theoretical framework. In the next section, the pertinent research and literature about the efficacy of interventions conducted by school counselors on groups of elementary school students is discussed. There is a focus on the empirical studies that elucidate the constructs of prosocial behaviors (considerate of other's feelings, shares readily, helpful, empathy, kindness) and peer relational issues (friendship, liked by other children, standing up for self, depending on others, cooperation). The literature review then looks at prevention research and programming that takes place before or after the typical hours of the school day. The chapter concludes with empirical studies that describe the specific constructs of prosocial behavior and peer relational problems.

Theoretical Framework

This program utilized person-centered theory as the foundation of the before-school program. This foundation creates the environmental condition that contributed to the successful implementation of the intervention. Researchers have found that gains for the students who have participated in cooperative groups depended upon the quality of the experiences. High-quality group experiences are ones "in which group members were friendly, helped one another, showed concern with one another's welfare, and worked collaboratively" (Battistich, Solomon, & Delucchi, 1993, p. 19). Group-interaction variables make a difference in the overall quality of the group. Those interaction variables were mediated through Rogers' theoretical constructs of empathy,

unconditional positive regard, and counselor congruence. As the counselor modeled these “ways of being” with the students in the intervention, the behavior was intended to be socially normed within this context and replicated by the members inside and outside of the program.

Facilitative conditions are a major component in student learning, according to Rogers. In *Freedom to Learn* (1994), Rogers discussed the finding of a 1975 study done by Aspy and Roebuck that involved 600 teachers and 10,000 students from kindergarten through 12th grade. The researchers examined the benefits of being highly facilitative. Highly facilitative educators are more respondent to student feelings, more likely to use student ideas in instructional interaction, generate more discussion with students, offer more praise of students, use more congruent language, facilitate discussion in student’s frame of reference, and smile more often in the presence of their students. This large body of research has been conducted that determined with this type of teacher, students missed four fewer days during the year, increased scores on self-concept/self-regard measures, showed greater gains on academic achievement measures, presented fewer disciplinary problems and fewer acts of vandalism, and were more likely to exhibit spontaneous thinking (Aspy & Roebuck, 1977).

These were the conditions of change that were employed during the study. However, as Rogers was wont to say, this is not a method or technique:

A person-centered way of being in an educational situation is something into which one grows. It is a set of values, not easy to achieve, that places emphasis on the dignity of the individual, the importance of personal choice, the significance of responsibility, the joy of creativity. It is a philosophy, built on a

foundation of the democratic way, that empowers each individual (Rogers & Freiberg, *Freedom to Learn*, 1994, p. 123).

A person-centered theory of counseling was realized within the educational environment. The transition was seamless, with much of the original intent of Rogers' necessary and sufficient conditions represented. The facilitation of significant learning, in this case, one of social skills and cooperation, was dependent upon the relationship between the learner and the facilitator. The first quality was "realness," or as it is understood in the counseling realm, congruence (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). The second qualities were prizing, acceptance, and trust, which we understand as an unconditional, positive regard. And the final quality was empathetic understanding, where the teacher (or facilitator) has a sensitive awareness of the student. This was not a diagnostic understanding but is something much deeper, a seeing the world through their eyes (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).

The goal of this type of educational experience was to become a fully functioning person (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). Rogers believed that using these facilitative conditions in education would produce a person similar to one who has been helped by therapy. The philosophy is one where the facilitator is key to assisting in the creation of a fully functioning person. A fully functioning person is one who is open to experience, existential living, and trusting in self. Experiences in learning and development can lead to this type of personal growth. This theoretical model of the person who emerges from the best of education is an individual who has experienced psychological growth. This idealized person has potential and is a realistic, self-enhancing, socialized, and creative

person. But as Rogers described it, this person does not exist but is someone we are moving toward, a goal (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).

Rogers believed that all children have dignity, value, and deserve respect (Wright, 2012). Children strive to be fully actualized and are able to make constructive changes in an environment that promotes their ability to make wise choices and decisions (Wright, 2012). When the school counselor was nonauthoritarian, provided unconditional acceptance of the child, and was viewed as competent, an environment that was conducive to change was created (O'Hara, 1995). Rogers (1957) proposed that the necessary and sufficient conditions must be present in a social environment to form relationships that lead to constructive personality development.

Personal relationships between the teacher (or in this case, the school counselor, who was teaching) and the student were the most pivotal factor in significant learning (Rogers, 1983). Students who feel respected and understood by the teacher perceive a more constructive climate for learning, find it easier to make personal relationships, and take more responsibility in the educational environment (Motschnig-Pitrik & Figl, 2007).

In the student-counselor relationship, it was important that the counselor have empathy, respect, and genuineness while taking into account the idiosyncratic frame of reference of the student and the student's experiences (Duncan & Moynihan, 1994). The counselor's relationship with the student promoted the student's capacity to discover their own inner resources (Shanks Glauser & Bozarth, 2001; Duncan & Moynihan, 1994).

Bozarth (1975) found that there are specific characteristics that counselors embody that facilitate successful outcomes. The first was accurate empathy, where the counselor was able to understand the client's experience and communicate that to them.

Nonpossessive warmth was where the counselor was able to provide a safe environment by demonstrating acceptance, positive regard, love, and valuing. Genuineness was authenticity of the counselor in the helping encounter (Bozarth, 1975). These conditions allowed for greater learning, understanding, and retention of social skills and problem-solving concepts.

Thompson (1968) adapted Rogers' work for use with elementary school counselors and suggested that there were four ingredients for an effective, helping relationship. Congruence was demonstrated by the elementary school counselor by being genuine and real within their relationships. The elementary school counselor demonstrated empathy by having an accurate understanding of the student's world. Positive regard was established by having a positive attitude with the students. And unconditional regard was when the counselor prized the other person in a complete way and accepted the behaviors in the moment. The most important element was that the teacher, parent, and child were able to perceive these qualities in the elementary school counselor. Thompson (1968) admitted that it may be difficult for the counselor to be all of these things, all of the time. But it was a goal, something to strive for in working with children (Thompson, 1968).

Person-centered practice, theory, and research value a basic trust in human beings (Rogers, 1980). Rogers observed that some people have found themselves in conditions that are inhumane yet they have a directional tendency toward growth. This constructive tendency is the basis of the person-centered approach, which has applicability in working with children and adolescents. In situations where Rogers facilitated intensive groups or provides to students a "freedom to learn," he had discovered a pervasive directional

tendency toward wholeness. The important component that can be offered by another person (teacher, counselor, and facilitator) was the condition that allows that potential to grow (Rogers, 1980). Providing the environment that allows for growth, the facilitative conditions potentially permit the students who participate in the intervention to become more fully functioning and self-actualized.

Tauch (1978) conducted four experiments to test Rogers' assumptions. Some of the highlights that relate to Rogers' assumptions included a high level of warm respect in the teachers accompanied by a low level of directive teaching correlated positively with the quality of the student's contributions; independent thinking; and initiative taking. It was found that empathetic understanding, genuineness, warm respect, and nondirective facilitative activities significantly related to the intellectual contributions, spontaneity, initiative, positive feelings during the lessons, and positive perceptions of the teacher (Tausch, 1978).

It was discovered that effective interpersonal relationships were essential to counselor effectiveness (Thompson, 1968). Some of the suggestions for improving those relationships included counselor introspection, in-service training, awareness of perception of self, and evaluation of one's own performance (Thompson, 1968). When counselors engaged in introspection, it involved looking at interpersonal relationships with others in the school. The counselor would also question themselves to determine if they are acting like themselves or are they playing a role. Was the counselor empathizing with the students to understand them? And then, was the counselor able to accurately reflect the student's feelings? Were the students being accepted by the counselor, or was

the counselor evaluating the students in some way by a preordained standard? Is the counselor able to accept the student unconditionally (Thompson, 1968)?

Rogers had such a strong opinion of the importance of interpersonal relationships that he did not believe that the counselor would be effective if the counselor was not able to establish these relationships. The most significant element in determining effectiveness was the quality of the helping relationship (Thompson, 1968).

Barrett-Lennard (2011) used this relational foundation by Rogers to create his own understanding of the power of relationships. He applied Rogers' person-centered therapy in a larger context where one change affects other levels, using personal and social change (Barrett-Lennard, 2011). Systems of association, such as in schools, are meaningful to individuals within. It was important to understand how relationships are influenced and powered (Barrett-Lennard, 2011). This understanding of the relational aspects within a school can be used to promote meaningful change.

Rogers believed that self-actualization can be realized through personal power (Tudor & Worrall, 2006). The counselor cannot force empowerment to students but can serve to not diminish their personal power, which can allow students to advocate for themselves while being supported. Rogers said, "It is not that this approach gives power to the person; it never takes it away" (Tudor & Worrall, 2006).

Rogers understood that educational efforts of school reform were misdirected (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). Things such as site-based management, national testing, changing school organization, and community councils have the potential to make lasting change, but these changes must take a back seat to improving relationships between individuals in the environment. The relationship between student and facilitator changes,

and with that, the environment becomes a learning community. Reform must take place from inside our schools (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).

Person-centered theory has been used to guide preventative interventions. One example was a 2006 experimental study that integrated a person-centered approach into an intervention that taught resilience to children (Ronnau-Bose & Frohlich-Gildhoff, 2009). The study elaborated on the findings that the person-centered approach to conducting the prevention work demonstrated positive results. The children had higher self-esteem, behavioral stability, and cognitive development. In contrast, the children in the control group did not receive the same outcomes (Ronnau-Bose & Frohlich-Gildhoff, 2009).

Counselors who conducted interventions within the person-centered theoretical conditions provide an environment in which those interpersonal relationships generate a catalyst for change. Students gained more from learning prosocial skills or managing peer relational issues when they are supported by a counselor who can demonstrate these attributes while connecting their learning to experience. This intervention used person-centered theory to engage the student as a whole person through interpersonal relationships and experiential activities.

Person-centered prevention programs work directly with children (Durlak & Wells, 1997). The intervention often used techniques that are adapted from counseling literature. By providing direct services, the emphasis was the prevention of specific problems (peer relational problems) or social-emotional health promotion (prosocial skills).

School Counselor Interventions

This section describes the efficacy of intervention work. There is specific research on school counselor interventions with elementary school students. Also included is relevant empirical work on groups.

Part of the expanded role of the counselor is to conduct and use research. Intervention research is particularly appropriate to the work that school counselors do. However, there seems to be a dearth today of this type of research. A 2005 study detailed the findings that intervention research in the primary research journals (*Cognition & Instruction, Contemporary Educational Psychology, Journal of Educational Psychology, Journal of Experimental Education, and American Educational Research Journal*) has declined over a 10-year period (Hsieh et al., 2005). In an effort to counter these deficits in the current research, new studies must be designed that examine the variables ignored in more recent studies. It was found that most of the interventional studies were brief, lasting less than a day, and used adults as participants and not children, assessed effects immediately rather than over time, and did not evaluate treatment integrity (Hsieh et al., 2005). This study provided a longer intervention (five times a week for 12 weeks), using the student's voice as qualitative data; the data was collected immediately after the intervention; and it included an evaluation of the program.

When interventions do have lasting effects, they are seen as being "magical" (Yeager & Walton, 2011). A recent study elaborated that those intervention studies that have long-lasting effects target students' subjective expectations in school, offer persuasive but not explicit methods for relaying the psychological concepts, and they are

contextual to the specific environment where the intervention is supported (Yeager & Walton, 2011). Ideally, interventions change the students' state of mind to take advantage and learn from opportunities in their school after the intervention. It was discovered that the recursive processes within the school impact the long-term effects on the students. The intent of this current before-school intervention was to give students the skills that will support them well after the intervention ends. The support includes being supplied with a journal that the students may keep and reflect upon. Also, there were other students in the group who can provide support at school. The benefits to the student also included the support of family members who took action to improve their child's well-being by bringing them to the program on a daily basis.

Positive mental health outcomes across the board can be attained through interventions that target some level of functioning (Durlak & Wells, 1997). This means that the intervention work that targets social-emotional competencies can lead to gains in other areas of a child's life. Developmental research indicated that effective mastery of social-emotional competencies was associated with greater well-being and better school performance, whereas the failure to achieve competence in these areas can lead to a variety of personal, social, and academic difficulties (Eisenberg, 2006; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998).

Quality, social-emotional learning instruction also provided students with opportunities to contribute to their class, school, and community and to experience the satisfaction, sense of belonging, and enhanced motivation that comes from such involvement (Hawkins, Smith, & Calalano, 2004). Many correlational and longitudinal studies have documented connections between social-emotional variables and academic

performance (e.g., Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 2000; Wang et al., 1997).

It was found that the overall average, weighted effect size for all school counseling interventions was 0.30 (Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Eder, 2011). This means that approximately 62% of the experimental group improved over the control group in a meta-analysis of many intervention studies. The effect size of 0.30 was based on 117 experimental studies that involved 153 interventions. The effectiveness of guidance curriculum and responsive services was consistent, with both components having an average effect size of 0.35. It was recommended that school counseling was most effective when a balanced approach was used. School counselors were urged to use an approach that provides both a guidance curriculum to all students and responsive services that responded to students' problems and issues (Whiston et al., 2011).

While the effect size of 0.35 was significant for guidance curriculum as well as for responsive services, it leads to the conclusion that not all counseling services were effective. Therefore, school counselors must be more selective in their approaches to the school counseling programs which will require them to understand the needs of their students and discover if the selected program will meet those needs. Whiston et al. (2009) further found that school counseling interventions tend to be particularly efficacious in increasing students' problem-solving behaviors and reducing disciplinary referrals. School counseling interventions had a small but significant influence on GPA and achievement tests (Whiston & Quinby, 2009).

Summarizing the literature on school counseling outcomes, Whiston and Quinby (2009) found that students who participated in school counseling interventions tend to

score a third of a standard deviation higher on outcome results than students who did not receive the interventions. The most significant results were found in the large effect sizes in the areas of discipline, problem solving, and increasing career knowledge. The effect sizes were smaller but significant, and related to the impact of school counseling interventions on academic achievement (Whiston & Quinby, 2009).

Sink and Stroh (2003) conducted a study that involved 5,618 third-grade and fourth-grade elementary school students. It was found that the academic achievement scores of elementary students who consistently attended schools that had a comprehensive school counseling program were significantly higher than those of students who attended schools that did not have a systematic guidance program.

It has been found that school counseling programs have a significant influence on discipline problems. Baker and Gerler (2008) reported that students who participated in a school counseling program had significantly fewer inappropriate behaviors and more positive attitudes toward school than students who did not participate in the program. The research studies were conclusive on the value of learning social skills in school. Verduyn, Lord, and Forrest (1990) found that school counselors were effective in teaching social skills. Lemberger, Brigman, Webb, and Moore (2011) found that if students were taught cognitive, social, and self-management skills and strategies in a caring, supportive, and encouraging environment, they would feel safe to take risks and try new strategies. This will lead to an increase in confidence in their abilities, which will lead to increased efforts in their academic abilities (Lemberger et. al., 2011).

Groups in schools

Group counseling is a preferred method in schools due to its efficacy and efficiency. School counselors often are burdened with large caseloads and extra duties (Wright, 2012). Group counseling is accepted in professional practice and is useful in providing many students with personal and social support from the counselor and from other peers in the group.

Prior to implementing any group intervention, school counselors should be aware of the developmental levels and needs of students (DeLucia-Waack, 2006). It is important for students in Grades 3-5 to have information that is easy to understand and discuss (Wright, 2012). Three major psycho-educational group types are in use in schools (Goodnough & Lee, 2007). These are groups to encourage growth, groups to improve school climate, and reformative groups, all of which are established to assist students in learning to cope with interpersonal problems (Goodnough & Lee, 2007).

Research has found that group counseling in schools is a vital way to support student growth and development by providing effective group-counseling experiences to students. This requires leadership, specialized knowledge and skills, and the ability to advocate effectively for the inclusion of a program of group counseling within a school (Perusse, Goodnough, & Lee, 2009). In 2009, Whiston and Quinby found in their meta-analysis that research in group-counseling outcomes can be effective with students who are experiencing problems and difficulties. Group interventions produced a weighted effect size of 0.35 (Whiston et al., 2007). Whiston and Sexton (1998) found that group counseling approaches for social skills training, family adjustment issues, and discipline problems were effective.

In a study by Kivlighan and Tarrant (2001), group leaders (N = 43) recorded intentions, and adolescent group members (N = 233) rated a climate after eight semistructured group sessions. Therapeutic work was negatively related, and safe environment was positively related to an increasing active and engaged climate, which was related to treatment benefit. Group structure and possibly interpersonal intentions were related to a climate which demonstrated a decrease in conflict and distance. This resulted in a positive leader relationship. Leaders must focus on group process rather than on individual change (Kivlighan & Tarrant, 2001). As Yalom (1995) suggested, the group leader's major task was to create a therapeutic group climate. The therapeutic climate fostered interactions that can result in positive, group member outcome. Unlike individual treatment, where the relationship between the client and therapist is tantamount, in-group treatment leaders probably should focus on creating a therapeutic group climate (Yalom, 1995).

A meta-analysis completed by Prout and Prout (1998) found strong support for the effectiveness of group intervention for students in a school. They suggested that given a common limitation on resources, school counselors should make greater use of group counseling. In particular, thematic groups brought together students experiencing similar problems and allowed counselors to make effective use of their time and skills. Group counseling has proven to be especially effective in schools to address adolescent problems, such as school attrition (Praport, 1993), abusive and violent dating relationships (Becky & Farren, 1997; Rosen & Bezold, 1996) and sexual abuse (May & Housley, 1996), learning disabilities, developmental concerns, improvement of achievement scores and interpersonal relationships (Schechtman, 1993), adjustments to

changes in family structure and in the management of aggression and stress (Whiston & Sexton, 1998). Another study reported that group counseling provided by school counselors' significantly decreased participants' aggressive and hostile behaviors (Omizo, Hershberger, & Omizo, 1988).

Hoag and Burlingame (1997) examined the effect of group treatment with children and adolescents ages 4-18. Various types of in-group treatment were assessed, including preventative programs, psychotherapy, counseling, and guidance. Results indicated that group treatment was significantly more effective for children and wait list and placebo control group. The average child or adolescent treated by group treatment was better off than 73% of those in control groups (Hoag & Burlingame, 1997).

Group counseling in schools was a central strategy to provide direct services and is a means of supporting student growth and development (Perusse, Goodnough, & Lee, 2009). To implement in the school setting, such group intervention requires leadership, specialized knowledge, and advocacy skills. The effectiveness of groups in the schools has been examined by meta-analytic research methods that looked specifically at preventative psychoeducational and counseling groups (Gerrity & DeLucia-Waack, 2007). One area examined was social competency groups, which the authors described as groups for learning social skills, for interpersonal problem-solving skills, and for communication and listening skills. The researchers found that overall group interventions were effective within the school setting, with prevention or early intervention being most effective (Gerrity & DeLucia-Waack, 2007). Literature and research on school counseling has found empirical data to support the efficacy of

counseling. Counseling interventions work to improve the experience of students, which results in favorable outcomes.

Prevention work for personal/social skills

School counselors must try different ways to access students because it is vital that students' psychosocial concerns are met to help achieve academic goals (Astramovich, Hoskins, & Bartlett, 2010). School counselors are required to develop innovative programs to help their students. Astramovich, Hoskins, and Bartlett (2010) created a new organizational framework for counseling in schools where multifaceted counseling centers provided comprehensive counseling and support services to students at school. The goal for comprehensive, school-based counseling centers was to ensure that all aspects of child and adolescent development were addressed appropriately in the school setting. The current process is to refer the student to counseling services where they may or may not be helped (Astramovich, Hoskins, & Bartlett, 2010).

Programs that focused on social-emotional learning taught the skills of self-efficacy, effective coping strategies, perspective taking, empathy, interpersonal problem solving, and decision making, which in turn created positive connections in school with peers and adults (Durlak et al., 2007). Durlak et al. (2010) recommended four practices for social-skill training within an intervention program. The first practice was sequential components, using a connected set of activities to achieve skill development. Secondly, programs needed to use active forms of learning. The third practice was to develop personal or social skills as part of the program. And finally, the programs needed to have explicit personal or social goals (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010).

Lewis et al. (1990) found that narrow, problem-focused prevention efforts were inadequate in addressing the socialization needs of children and adolescents. This research suggested that there were seven characteristics of effective school-based prevention programs. The first was that programs should have a theoretical basis that recognized that problem behaviors were multiply determined. There was not one variable that caused issues within the schools, which meant there was not only one solution to solve them. The second characteristic was that school-based prevention should be directed at influencing a positive, interpersonal climate that facilitates socialization. It was important not only to concentrate on the individual's social skills but also on the school environment characteristics. The third characteristic was programs that promoted positive influences on social development were more effective. They were in opposition to programs that counteract negative influences. The fourth characteristic of prevention programs were that they should be comprehensive and carried out over time. These types of programs allowed for progressive skill building and practice with feedback. The fifth characteristic was that school-based prevention programs should be a part of the school curriculum. The sixth characteristic was prevention programs should begin prior to the emergence of problem behavior. For prevention to be effective, it was important that the necessary skills were promoted before the problem would arise in order to preempt it or to minimize its effects. And the final characteristic was researchers found that prevention programs must monitor the process of implementation. It was important that the people who worked on the program were properly trained (Lewis, Battistich, & Schaps, 1990).

Durlak and Wells (1997) conducted a meta-analysis review of primary-prevention programs designed to prevent behavioral and social problems in children and adolescents.

They defined primary prevention as “an intervention intentionally designed to reduce the future incidence of adjustment problems in currently normal populations as well as efforts directed at the promotion of mental health functioning” (Durlak & Wells, 1997, p. 117). Some 177 primary-prevention programs were reviewed. The median age of participants was 9.3 (SD = 7.78). The sample size varied, with 34% involving samples of fewer than 50 students and 29% of more than 100 students. The mean effect size for the person-centered programs in education for children ages 2-7 was .70; for children 7-11, it was .24; and for children older than 11, it was .33. The mean effect size for interpersonal problem solving was .93 for children 2-7 and .36 for children 7-11. Affective education was defined as one that attempted to increase awareness and expression of feelings as well as possible causes of behavior. The programs ranged from a few sessions to the entire school year. Interpersonal problem-solving programs were attempts to teach cognitive-based skills to identify interpersonal problems and to work toward resolving those issues (Durlak & Wells, 1997).

The outcomes for an average participant in a primary-prevention program ranged from 59% to 82% above those in the control group. This study confirmed the importance of primary prevention as a strategy to achieve change in school populations. It also was implied that these interventions both reduced risks and increased protections for target populations. Durlak and Wells (1997) postulated that successful primary-prevention programs can reduce the rate of maladjustment in children and adolescents. Evaluation studies have proven invaluable in demonstrating the efficacy of prevention work (Lewis, Battistich, & Schaps, 1990). Looking at this study through an evaluative lens better determined not only if it was effective but which parts were the most effective.

Intervention Constructs

This intervention explored two prevention strategies used with children in elementary school. One was learning prosocial skills, and the other was learning how to work on peer-relational issues through experiential theory learning. Both constructs were well researched and had proven successful in schools and with this age group. Both also fell under the skills and knowledge base of school counselors.

A meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal social and emotional learning (SEL) programs that involved 270,034 students in kindergarten through high school (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). They proposed the following hypotheses: H1, a meta-analysis of school-based SEL programs, which would yield a significant, positive mean effect across a variety of skill, attitudinal, behavioral, and academic outcomes. The second: H2, programs conducted by classroom teachers and other school staff would produce significant outcomes. The third: H3, which were interventions that combine components within and outside of the daily classroom routine and would yield stronger effects than those that were only classroom based. This included two key variables: the use of recommended practices for developing skills and adequate program implementation. The fourth: H4, which included staff that used the practice of SAFE (sequenced, active, focused, and explicit) in SEL interventions, which would be more successful than those that did not. The fifth: H5, SEL programs that encountered problems during program implementation and would be less successful than those that did not report such problems (Durlak et al., 2011).

The researchers completed an extensive literature search with inclusion and exclusion criteria. The multiple cohorts were coded and analyzed separately. The independent variables were the intervention format, use of SAFE practices, and reported implementation problems. The dependent variables were six student outcomes: social and emotional skills, attitudes toward self and others, positive social behaviors, conduct problems, emotional distress, and academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011).

For each of the hypotheses, the researchers found the following: For H1, 95% confidence intervals obtained at post-test across all reviewed programs in each outcome category. All six means (range of .22 to .57) were significantly greater than zero and confirm the first hypothesis. Compared to the controls, students demonstrated enhanced SEL skills, attitudes, and positive social behaviors following intervention and also demonstrated fewer conduct problems and had lower levels of emotional distress. Academic performance improved significantly, and overall mean effect did not differ significantly for test scores and grades (mean ESs = .27 and .33, respectively). Not all of the studies collected academic performance data; however, the subset involved 135,396 students. For H2: Classroom-by-teacher programs were effective in all six outcomes categories, and multicomponent programs conducted by school staff were effective in four outcome categories. But classroom programs delivered by nonschool personnel produced only three significant outcomes (improved SEL skills, prosocial attitudes, and conduct problems). For H3: Not supported; comparable but not significantly higher than those obtained in classroom-by-teacher programs in four areas (attitudes, conduct problems, emotional distress, and academic performance) and did not yield significant effects for SEL skills or positive social behavior whereas class by teacher did. For H4:

Programs following all four recommended training procedures (SAFE) produced significant effects for all six outcomes, whereas programs not coded as SAFE achieved significant effects in only three areas (attitudes, conduct problems, and academic performance). For H5: Both SAFE and implementation problems moderate SEL outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011).

This study added to the importance of understanding social-emotional programs conducted in schools. The implications for schools were that social-emotional learning programs do have significant positive effects, as evidenced by increased prosocial behaviors and by reduced conduct and internalizing problems. They also found that for programs to be successful, they should be well designed and well conducted. This meta-analysis focuses exclusively on universal, school-based, social-emotional development programs (Durlak et al., 2011), which made them applicable to this study.

The specific constructs of prosocial behavior (considerate of others' feelings, shares readily, helpful, empathy, kindness) and peer-relational issues (friendship, liked by other children, standing up for self, depending on others, cooperation) have been used in research in the past. The relative, empirical evidence was important to establish historical precedence for focusing on these constructs in this study.

Prosocial Behaviors: Considerate of others' feelings

A report supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Defense demonstrated the importance of a school environment that promotes a feeling of security through connectedness (Blum, 2005). A sense of belonging and relationships with other students and faculty were important in feeling connected to school, and nonacademic aspects of school were a significant contributor to those feelings. This report revealed seven

qualities that influence students' positive attachment to school: had a sense of belonging, liked school, perceived that teachers are supportive and caring, had good friends within the school, were engaged in their current and future academic progress, believed discipline is fair and effective, and participated in extracurricular activities. Based on a review of evidence-based practice, it was found that the health-promotion programs that enhanced connectedness are grounded in theory and research, taught children how to apply social skills in daily life, built connections to school through caring practices, provided developmentally and culturally appropriate instruction, and incorporated continuing evaluation and improvement. Effective programs also used interactive programs that enhanced development of interpersonal skills (Blum, 2005).

Prosocial behavior: Shares readily

A mixed-method study was conducted using the intervention “Everyone Playing in Class” that worked on the students’ role of play in emotional well-being, relationship building, and communication skills (Woolf, 2011). A pre-post intervention assessment was conducted and found that the intervention increased the self-esteem, ability to engage in social play, and the importance of relationships between students’ development of well-being. The researcher concluded that environmental conditions that allowed time to engage in group work increased the student’s ability to cooperate, share, and play socially (Woolf, 2011).

Prosocial behavior: Helpful

Prosocial behavior in the classroom was the subject of a longitudinal study conducted over five years (Solomon, Watson, Delucchi, & Schaps, 1988) that focused on a single cohort as the students moved from kindergarten through fourth grade. The

program was derived from the literature about prosocial characteristics and behavior of children at the time. The premise was one in which the environment emphasized prosocial behaviors and sense of community. The specific components consisted of cooperative activities, child-centered developmental discipline, activities that promoted social understanding, activities that highlighted prosocial values, and helping activities. The teachers were trained twice a year to deliver and implement this training. The intervention was assessed in two ways. The first was a sign system where an observer would watch the class for two minutes and check the categories of behavior that were observed. The second was a rating system, filled out by the observer away from the classroom that rated teacher behavior, classroom atmosphere, classroom activities, and student behavior. Additional data was received by a teacher questionnaire that asked about classroom events, goals in teaching and discipline, perceptions of school climate, and student behavior. Also, when the students were in the third grade, they were asked questions about their perceptions of classroom activities, reasons for doing them, and their teacher's goals and intentions. This quasi-experimental study results were that the treatment group had higher scores in all five components. Students also scored higher in supportive and friendly behavior and in spontaneous prosocial behavior. Children who participated during the five years of the program were observed to be more supportive, friendly, helpful, and had more spontaneity with prosocial behavior (Solomon, Watson, Delucchi, & Schaps, 1988).

The items that were measured in classroom observations for cooperative activities included the submeasures of encouragement of cooperation, organization and facilitation of cooperative activities, promotion of competition (negative weight), student-

cooperative group activities, and collaborative within-group student discussions. The submeasures for developmental discipline included sympathy or supportiveness, acceptance or warmth, provisions or allowance for student autonomy, provisions or allowance for student input, irritability or hostility (negative weight), and the use of external control (negative weight). The items measured for social understanding included such things encourages one to express one's feelings, activity focuses on understanding others, and one's focus on interpersonal relationships. The submeasures for highlighting prosocial values were prosocial emphasis (i.e., used spontaneous occurrences to emphasize prosocial values) and highlighting of prosocial behavior (i.e., states own prosocial motives). For helping activities, the submeasures were encouragement of helping and student helping. Teaching competence ratings included attributes such as confident, enthusiastic, interested, and clear and easily understood. The supportive, friendly, and helpful student behavior submeasures included student-supportive or friendly behavior and spontaneous student helping. Negative student behavior items included demands or commands, aggression or altercation, teasing, or criticizing. The items that showed spontaneous, prosocial student behavior included spontaneous helpfulness, concern for others, and spontaneous cooperation. And finally, student harmoniousness was measured by apparent interest and involvement, apparent happiness, etc. (Solomon, Watson, Delucchi, & Schaps, 1988). The researchers also found that participating in the program did not seem to undermine academic achievement and that it also did not increase academic test scores (Solomon, Watson, Delucchi, & Schaps, 1988).

Prosocial behavior: Empathy

There is a variety of helping and comforting prosocial behavior. Evidence exists that these behaviors, which included direct attempts to comfort, help, or defend, developed at about age 2 (Baillargeon et al., 2011). These behaviors became more sophisticated and diversified as children age (Baillargeon et al., 2011). Characteristics associated with prosocial behaviors were empathy, altruism, and cooperation (Dovidio, Piliavein, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006). Early development of prosocial skills led to positive outcomes as children get older (Johnson, Seidenfeld, Izard, & Kobak, 2013).

The lack of prosocial behavior at the elementary school level has been linked to academic difficulties (Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997). Students who lacked social-emotional competencies can become less connected to school as they progress from elementary school into high school, and unfortunately, this negatively affected behavior, academic performance, and health (Blum & Libbey, 2004). The multidimensional nature of prosocial behavior had been illustrated by Carlo and Randall (2002), who described the construct in six ways. One of them was altruistic behavior, which was voluntary helping motivated primarily by the needs and welfare of others. Public prosocial behavior occurs in front of others and was considered to be done for self-interest. Anonymous prosocial behavior was when the recipient or the person performing the behavior was not known. Dire prosocial behavior occurred in a crisis. Emotional prosocial behavior occurred in response to another person's emotions. And compliant behavior occurred when the behavior was requested (Carlo & Randall, 2002). The emergence of prosocial behavior was affected by the development of perspective-taking skills or by the ability to understand the point of view of another person (Moore, 1990).

Prosocial behavior: Kindness

Many of the prosocial behaviors, including kindness, empathy, and helpfulness, were activated through the community-service activity during the before-school intervention. The goal of this intervention was to learn the skills, practice the activities, and commit to action through service to others. Community-service learning or service learning has become a more widely accepted practice for schools for academic learning (Ohn & Wade, 2009). Researcher have found that community service is learning by doing. But it was suggested by Ohn and Wade (2009) that community-service learning also should include learning how students solved social problems and made informed decisions relating to that information.

Within the literature, community service and service learning sometimes can be used interchangeably. The one difference that was noted was the use of community-service learning and how it pertains to noncurriculum-based learning without specific learning objectives. Service learning is community service with clearly stated learning objectives that usually are tied to an academic course (Meinhard & Brown, 2010). Suggestions for successful use of community-service programs included providing a structure that allows for student responsibility and providing them with opportunities to use the prosocial skills they have learned. Giving the students a chance to exercise their ability to problem solve, work together, and understand how they can impact the community while developing and growing as an individual has proven to benefit students (Meinhard & Brown, 2010).

A meta-analysis of 62 studies that involved 11,837 students was conducted to determine the outcomes of using service learning in an educational context (Celio,

Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011). In comparison to controls, the service learning or community service had significant gains in five outcome areas: attitudes toward self (ES = .28), attitudes toward school and learning (ES = .28), civic engagement (ES = .27), social skills (ES = .30), and academic achievement (ES = .43). These studies further examined the effects of the recommended practices in the implementation of the service-learning program. Four standards were examined from the National Youth Leadership Council's K-12 Service Learning Standards for Quality Practice (2011): linked programs to academic and program curriculum or objectives, incorporated youth voice, involved community partners, and provided opportunities for reflection. Not all of the programs reported in the meta-analysis implemented all four standards. However, those programs that used all four standards had twice the magnitude, .35 versus .17, of those that used none. These positive gains were useful in the design of before-school intervention that uses community or service learning as a means to exercise prosocial behaviors.

Peer relational issues: Friendship

Additional benefits of conducting a preventative group intervention included the mere sense of social connectedness that enhanced achievement motivation (Walton, Cohen, Cwir, & Spencer, 2012). These researchers found that people acquire goals and motivation from others as a consequence of small cues of social connectedness. This supported the importance of social relationships as being a motivator for people. Specifically, working together on a challenging task increased intrinsic motivation for individuals (Carr & Walton, 2014).

Peer relational issues: Liked by other children

Classroom activities that used concepts such as cooperation in an open setting consistently related to positive feelings and improved student relationships (Slavin, 1990). To build a sense of community among students, school staff (including counselors) must model positive interpersonal behavior (Battistich, Solomon, & Watson, 1997).

In 2005, a study was conducted that examined the therapeutic factors present in children's groups in emotional awareness insight, relationship climate, other versus self-focus, and problem identification (Shechtman & Gluk, 2005). The 64 students in Grades 4-6 rated group relationship climate as the most therapeutic factor. Relationship climate was defined as the formation and maintenance of relationships in the group. This included such elements as encouragement and support, acceptance, liking, being empathetically listened to, and attraction to the group (Shechtman & Gluk, 2005). This study added to the importance of promoting supportive relationships between group members.

Peer relational issues: Standing up for self

The longitudinal effects of an intervention designed to reduce risk and to promote resilience among youth was published by Battistich, Schaps, and Wilson (2004), who found that overall, the students who participated in an intervention (Child Development Project) in elementary school were more engaged in and committed to school, were more prosocial, and had fewer problem behaviors during middle school. These students also were rated as having higher academic performance and associated with peers who were more prosocial than the matched comparison group (Battistich, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004).

Aggression can be mediated within the school environment in three ways (Opinas & Horne, 2006). School environment contributed to the decrease in aggression through interpersonal factors, relational factors, school environment, and the community, culture, and media (Opinas & Horne, 2006). Some protective factors were amplified by this before-school program. Students who participated in school activities were taught positive values such as honesty, friendship, and respect. The students learned to use problem-solving skills and to make friends. The school environment's protective factors were positive climate, encouragement of positive relationships, and scenarios that provided opportunities for meaningful participation in school activities. All were qualities that this before-school program intended to bring to the students. The community factors, which also were exhibited by this program, were defined as supervised activities for children and youth (Opinas & Horne, 2006).

Peer relational issues: Depending on others

Schaps (2003) wrote about creating a school community using the research as a basis for this important need. School communities can create a bond with the people and institutions that helps us satisfy our needs (Watson, Battistich, & Solomon, 1997). When a school meets students' basic psychological needs, students become increasingly committed to the school (Schaps, 2003). Such a sense of community will allow students to learn skills and develop habits that will benefit them inside and outside of the school environment. Schaps (2003) found that students in schools with a strong sense of community were more likely to be academically motivated (Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps, & Lewis, 2000); acted ethically and altruistically (Schaps, Battistich, & Solomon, 1997); developed social and emotional competencies (Solomon et al., 2000);

and avoided a number of problem behaviors, including drug use and violence (Resnick et al., 1997). Programs that emphasized community building were found to outperform schools in academic outcome (higher grade-point averages and achievement test scores), teacher ratings of behavior (better academic engagement, respectful behavior, and social skills), and self-reported misbehavior (less misconduct in school and fewer delinquent acts) (Battistich, 2001).

A longitudinal study that assessed the enduring effects of the Seattle Social Development Project was conducted. Researchers found that the students who participated in the project while they were in elementary school had lower rates of violent behavior, heavy drinking, and sexual activity, as well as higher academic motivation and achievement at age 18 than those who had not participated in the program (Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbot, & Hill, 1999).

Schaps (2003) suggested ways to implement community-building approaches. Four approaches were particularly beneficial. They were to actively cultivate respectful, supportive relationships among students, teachers, and parents. Cultivating supportive relationships allowed students from diverse backgrounds to feel included and allowed for all to assume active roles in the school. The second recommendation was to emphasize common purposes and ideals. Empowering students with a strong sense of community contributed to the development of characteristics essential to good character and citizenship, such as fairness, concern for others, and personal responsibility, which became a norm. The next recommendation was to provide regular opportunities for service and cooperation. Students learned the skills of cooperation, collaboration, and communication and thus were more likely to develop richer relationships. This included

the goal of learning to help others. Finally, the students should be given developmentally appropriate opportunities for autonomy and influence. Allowing students to have input in establishing the community helped to prepare them for the complexities of citizenship in a democracy.

The caring-community orientation was embraced by many researchers (Battistich, Schnaps, & Wilson, 2004; Gomez & Ang, 2007; Morrison & Allen, 2007; Payne, Gottfredson, & Gottfredson, 2003). These psychoeducational methods of school counseling included ideas of personal optimism, hope and civility; democratic decision making; student self-confidence; and discovery-based and lifelong learning (Sink & Edwards, 2008).

Peer relational issue: Cooperation

Using cooperative games was another way school counselors can promote cooperation and positive social interaction (Carlson, 1999). Child-centered approaches used play to build self-esteem and to increase social interaction. Carlson (1999) offered school counselors pragmatic interventions to use with student groups as part of their developmental guidance programs.

In 2011, Choi, Johnson, and Johnson published a study that examined the relationships among cooperative experiences, social interdependence propositions, harm-intended aggression, victimization, and prosocial behaviors among children in third through fifth grades in 217 elementary schools. A path analysis was conducted to determine the extent that cooperation predicts cooperative, competitive, and individualistic predispositions. The analysis predicted the extent that those predispositions further predicted harm-intended aggression, victimization, and prosocial

behaviors, with attention to gender and age as variables (Choi, Johnson, & Johnson, 2011).

It was found that cooperative experience predicted how often the children engaged in prosocial behavior but not how often they engaged in harm-intended aggression (Choi, Johnson, & Johnson, 2011). Cooperative experiences increased the frequency of prosocial behaviors. It was concluded that the greater number of cooperative experiences children have, the more likely they will engage in prosocial behaviors with their peers, a scenario that leads to positive relationships. Cooperative predispositions were defined as a preference for or liking of engaging in cooperative behaviors to increase outcomes for themselves and others (Choi, Johnson, & Johnson, 2011). The findings implied that increasing the number of prosocial behaviors that students engage in will decrease the number of incidents of harm-intended aggression (Choi, Johnson, & Johnson, 2011).

With regards to age and gender differences, cooperativeness marginally declined in the fifth grade. The researchers posited that this may be due to the fifth-grade students anticipating the more competitive nature of middle schools and preparing for that. It also may be due to the fact that because the students are the oldest in the school, they tended to act in a superior manner to younger students (Choi, Johnson, & Johnson, 2011). There were systematic differences between the genders, with girls behaving more cooperatively and showing more prosocial behavior than boys. The researchers believed that the differences could be genetic, due to gender-role socialization, or that girls may be more developmentally mature at this age (Choi, Johnson, & Johnson, 2011).

Overall, this study was important because it adds to the research about the positive outcomes of cooperative education. Providing cooperative learning experiences on a regular basis may be a useful intervention to increase students' overall cooperativeness, which reduces harm-intended aggression and increases prosocial behavior (Choi, Johnson, & Johnson, 2011). Additional benefits of conducting a preventative group intervention included the mere sense of social connectedness that enhances achievement motivation (Walton, Cohen, Cwir, & Spencer, 2012). These researchers have found that people acquired goals and motivation from others as a consequence of small cues of social connectedness. This supported the importance of social relationships as serving as a motivator for people. Specifically, working together on a challenging task increased intrinsic motivation for individuals (Carr & Walton, 2014).

School counselors have been found effective in promoting a strength-based perspective within the schools (Bryan & Henry, 2008). This study elaborated on the results that African-American students benefitted from a strength-based program. The promotion of positive behaviors within the school led to a decline in discipline referrals over one academic school year (Bryan & Henry, 2008).

This current study adds to the social skills and cooperation research, which used a preventative approach to improve prosocial behavior and to decrease peer-relational problems. The roles of the school counselor included the use of group counseling in direct services with students. This previously mentioned research demonstrated that group work is appropriate and efficacious when used with elementary school students.

Out-of-School Time Programs

Currently, school counselors find it difficult to include meaningful interventions within the school day due to the demands of the students' time with academics. School counselors must be prudent and creative in providing services in a way that works for all members of the school environment. The proposed solution was to conduct school-counselor prevention-group work in a before-school setting. This intervention was supported by various research studies. The following are examples of such research.

After-school programs (ASPs) or out-of-school time (OST) programs occur outside of mandated school hours and were created for different purposes and designed to affect different outcomes (Lauer et al., 2006). Most current OST programs generally have one of three purposes: improve students' academic performance, prevent problem behaviors from developing, and encourage positive youth development (Lauer et al., 2006). Bodilly and Beckett (2005) found that the call for more OST programs was misguided and that instead they recommended that improving the quality of existing programs should take precedence over increasing their supply. There is a need for quality OSTs.

Researchers have found the characteristics of effective components include such things as an emphasis on social skills or character development; more structure, with a predictable schedule; qualified and well-trained staff; and low attrition (Durlak & Weissberg 2007; Fashola, 1998; Gottfredson, Cross, & Soulé, 2007). Durlak and Weissberg (2007) reviewed 73 quasi-experimental and experimental programs outside of school time that contained personal and social skills and found a significant difference between programs that used evidence-based, skills-training approaches and those that did

not. The former uniformly produced multiple benefits for youth but the latter “were not successful in any outcome area” (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007, p. 5).

The following elements were used to identify programs that used evidence-based approaches: a sequenced set of activities to achieve skill objectives, the use of active forms of learning, emphasis concentration on developing personal or social skills, and the targeting of specific personal or social skills (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). Durlak and Weissberg (2007) concluded on the basis of their meta-analysis that ASPs helped students in multiple ways in their personal, social, and academic life. Specifically, their results showed that, on average, out-of-school programs have a positive impact on school bonding, attitudes about self-efficacy and self-esteem, behavioral adjustment indicators (e.g., prosocial and antisocial behaviors as well as drug use), and school performance as measured by grades and achievement, test scores (effect sizes ranging from .11 to .34, with an average of .22). Positive outcomes were detected only for programs that used evidence-based skill training approaches (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007).

Studies have shown that students engaged in extracurricular activities (sports, service clubs, and art club) are less likely to drop out (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). These students also are more likely to have higher academic achievement (Gerber, 1996). Many researchers believed that involvement in activities outside of the school day impacted academic performance indirectly by increased connectedness to school and student strengths such as self-esteem and positive social networks (Cosden, Morrison, Gutierrez, & Brown, 2004). The protective factors related to after-school activities were that they can be an opportunity for parents to become involved; they supported students’ nonacademic talents; they connected students to positive peers via school-sponsored

activities; minimum academic requirements can motivate students to keep their grades up; and they provided supervision when parents are working (Cosden, Morrison, Gutierrez, & Brown, 2004).

Significant increases in positive social behaviors and a reduction of problem behaviors were discovered in a 2010 meta-analysis of ASPs that sought to promote personal and social skills (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). This study was unique because there had not been a study that examined the outcomes of ASPs, described the nature and magnitude of gains from these programs, and identified the effective components of the programs. The meta-analysis looked at programs that occurred during the school year outside of school hours that were supervised by adults. The programs had to include a personal and social-skills component for children aged 5-18. The results were significant, with increases in the children's self-perceptions, bonding to school, positive social behaviors, school grades, and achievement test scores. There also were declines in the number of problem behaviors (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). The meta-analysis examined program dosage also known as attendance rates of programs. The researchers conducted analyses and it was found that attendance was positively related to youth outcomes.

Studies have shown that involvement in extracurricular activities was associated with school engagement and achievement (Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsey, 1999; Gerber, 1996; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). Researchers discovered that students who participate in extracurricular activities are less likely to drop out and more likely to have higher academic achievement. Also, students considered "at risk" benefited more than normal achievers, had an increased level of connectedness to the school, and helped to

build student strengths, which increase self-esteem and positive social networks. Ross, Saavedra, Shur, Winters, and Felner (1992) found that participation in an after-school program designed to build self-esteem had positive effects on standardized test scores in math and reading.

The most successful youth programs were interactive in nature, use coaching and role playing, and employ a set of structured activities to guide youth toward achievement of specific goals (Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; Tobler et al., 2000). Durlak et al. (2007) studied the effects of a change in social systems of 526 outcome studies, where 64% of the interventions included systemic change to foster developmental competencies. This study included after-school programs where adult staff members led small groups in recreational and social activities. Interventions were found to have .74 ES for psychosocial environment of schools when changes were made in the system. This study quantified the magnitude of system change for prevention interventions for children. The authors pointed to the impressive nature of the findings because changing systems was much more difficult than changing individuals, a finding that may be encouraging for researchers engaging in attempts at system changes (Durlak et al., 2007).

It was discovered that whole-school approaches that extracurricular activities in which students participated with school staff promoted connectedness to school (Rowe & Stewart, 2009). This connectedness in turn was found to be a protective factor for child and adolescent health, education, and social well-being (Rowe & Stewart, 2009). This qualitative study reinforced the importance of providing out-of-school events that are student-centered and provide real-life learning opportunities (Rowe & Stewart, 2009).

A review of the literature was conducted to establish support for this school-counselor intervention using group work in schools and preventative work for personal/social skills. This chapter illuminated the specific constructs of prosocial behavior and peer relational issues. And finally, research in out-of-school time programs was discussed.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand the student experience and perception of change after participating in a before-school counselor intervention focused on learning prosocial behaviors and developing peer relational skills. This qualitative evaluation included both how they experienced the program and if they perceived any change in themselves after participating in the program. Students were interviewed about their lived experiences in the program. This interview used both inductive evaluations (seeking information that has not been discovered a priori) and deductive evaluations (measuring attainment of predetermined goals). As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the importance of prosocial skills and relationships among students is seen as related to students' overall mental health and performance in school.

Chapter 3 includes a description of the methodological tradition of evaluation research and research design. The research question is included as well as are the definitions of the constructs. The sample section includes information about the participants, research area, sample strategy, and issues regarding consent. The data-collection section describes the methods used to collect the data and the implications of using interviews as a primary source of data. Data-analysis procedures explain how data is organized, coded, analyzed, and described. All relevant ethical issues are investigated, including confidentiality, de-identification of data, and consent and assent procedures. Finally, trustworthiness is addressed as a source of research quality.

Methodological Tradition

Evaluation research is a method that is distinguished not by the unique strategy it employs but instead by the purpose of the methods (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). The roots of evaluation research are supported by applied social science. Berk and Rossi wrote, “. . . the best evaluation research and the best evaluators draw on a number of disciplines, using an eclectic repertoire of concepts and methods” (Thinking About Program Evaluation, 1990, p. 12). Evaluation seeks not only to describe how an intervention is operating but the underlying logic behind it (Clarke & Dawson, 1999).

Evaluation research is a type of applied social science research that looks to quantify and qualify information about implementation, operation, and effectiveness of programs created and designed to bring about change (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). Hamilton (1977) compared evaluation models with classical models and found that they tend to be more extensive (not necessarily centered on numerical data), more naturalistic (based on program activity rather than on program intent), and more adaptable (not constrained by experimental or predetermined design). This method was valuable because it likely will be sensitive to the different values of program participants, to endorse empirical methods that incorporate ethnographic fieldwork, to develop feedback materials that are couched in the natural language of the participants, and to shift the locus of formal judgment from the evaluator to the participants (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013).

Using a qualitative approach allowed for a description of the perceptions and experiences of the students involved in the program. Qualitative evaluation research was used to understand the internal dynamics of a program through interviews with

participants and through direct observations (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). Evaluators are urged to adopt the approaches, rather than to follow an inflexible approach, that are best suited for the nature and context of the environment and participants (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). Elliott and Kushner (2007) wrote an evaluation manifesto based on their reflections over three decades of evaluation research. They discovered the following points about evaluation methodology that are applicable to this study. Evaluation should be designed to provide insights into educational purposes and practice, including matters of curriculum, philosophy, and social implication (Elliott & Kushner, 2007).

Researcher Positionality

The researcher (Jennifer E. Rogers) ontological position is one of idealism, which includes the belief that reality is mentally constructed. Human beings are constantly trying to create “reality,” but there is not one true state of reality. So much of what we determine is reality is based on our own ideas and beliefs—or on ideas and beliefs of our current culture or religious beliefs or things that are equally transitory. Idealism suggests that knowledge is the meaning that research participants assign to their lives (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). We can learn more about the participants by understanding the knowledge they hold. This is especially true in understanding the world of 8-11-year-old children who may not have the same belief systems or understanding of the world as adults.

My perspective is one of intersubjectivity, where research is mutual and co-arises from the engagement of interdependent individuals (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). When working with research participants, I believed it was important to collect

multiple perspectives—especially those who are systemically interdependent, such as the members of this group. Each student brought a unique understanding to this process.

Understanding participant experience in their own voice is consistent with qualitative research. And allowing for different “realities” is consistent with Patton’s (1997) pragmatic view of qualitative evaluation:

The focus has shifted to methodological appropriateness rather than orthodoxy, methodological creativity rather than rigid adherence to a paradigm, and methodological flexibility rather than conformity to a narrow set of rules. I believe that the flexible, responsive evaluator can shift back and forth between paradigms within a single evaluation setting (Patton, 1997, pp. 295-296).

Using the practice of reflexivity, I attempted to understand my own subjective experiences by becoming conscious of bias and assumptions that are a part of qualitative studies (Creswell, 2013). I am a doctoral student with more than five years of school counseling experience and 20 years working in the school environment. Being a 41-year-old, White, heterosexual married woman with children may have provided a challenge to understanding the nuances of being a child, with different racial or ethnic heritage, different types of family structures, and with different socioeconomic status.

My responsibility was to understand the essence of what is happening in the situation, as well as to consider how the participants worked within the before-school program. The nature of the social context of this study influences the methods employed in evaluation research. The evaluator must contend with methodological issues as well as with practical difficulties of conducting research in the field (Clarke & Dawson, 1999).

Evaluation research uses the terms internal evaluation and external evaluation. For this study, the researcher lands in both positions. I was an external evaluator because I was an outsider looking in within the school but also was an internal evaluator because it was a researcher-created program. The two approaches, although diametrically opposed, are not mutually exclusive. Patton (1986) believed that evaluators are best suited when they can claim the advantages of both an internal and an external position.

Although I have worked within schools, I had not been employed by this school and was not seen as an insider by the students or the staff. There are advantages and disadvantages of having been an external evaluator. The advantages included an independent stance that includes a fresh perspective, an overview of numerous organizations to serve as comparisons, and a resilience to intimidation (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). The lack of an internal position within the school had its disadvantages. It meant that the program was vulnerable to the principal's discretion and being an outsider required the researcher to prove herself as being reliable and knowledgeable.

Because this intervention had been created by the researcher, I was responsible for evaluating my own program. The advantages to being an internal evaluator were familiarity with the intervention and a greater commitment to implementing evaluation methods to gain from the information provided about the program (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). The disadvantages of holding these multiple roles include having a vested interest in a particular outcome and being uninformed of internal matters within the school that could impact the evaluation (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). These disadvantages were mitigated through member checking after the interview; I used multiple coders working on themes to discourage bias. Also, I encouraged open communication with all members

of the school (especially with the principals and counselor), the parents, and the students themselves to prevent external matters from interfering with the research process.

In qualitative research, there is an understanding that it is important in the role of a researcher to investigate biases (Creswell, 2013). My assumptions and biases were identified as follows: (a) The researcher had a personal understanding and belief that the environment of a school can impact the people within the school; (b) based on that understanding, improving the experience of the people within that school will have a positive impact on the overall environment; (c) prosocial behaviors and peer relational skills can be taught; (d) learning prosocial behaviors and peer relational skills and practicing them in a group will cause them to be implemented in the “real world”; (e) school counselors can and should implement creative ways to improve both the individual student’s experience and the overall school climate; and (f) the researcher believes that children have the potential for growth, regardless of background.

Procedure: Before-School Intervention

Each day, the students followed a similar schedule, but the contents of the program were based on the needs of the group. The needs of the group were monitored by the researcher, with daily checks for understanding the material and being able to apply the material, as well as by the interactions among the students in vivo. For example, if one student hurt another student’s feelings, that real-time incident was discussed in the group, and everyone in the group was invited to discuss how to creatively problem-solve that issue. The daily schedule included a morning greeting as a group, journal writing, social-skills lesson, and team-building exercise. The social-skills lesson focused on things such as dealing with conflict, cooperation, learning from mistakes, problem solving, body

language, and identifying positive relationships. The team-building exercises were student directed and geared toward an area of need within the school or the community. The team-building exercise was implemented using the ideas learned in the social-skills piece through a service-learning project. The students determined the area of need, to help a local no-kill animal shelter where they organized a school wide penny drive. Before being released to their classes, the students were escorted to the cafeteria for breakfast or to the playground.

All of the skills practiced during the 12 weeks were taught using a model adapted from Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984). Beginning with abstract conceptualization, the students learned the concepts (e.g., respect, cooperation, and kindness) presented through discussion, worksheets, and writing prompts. The next step was to active experimentation where students applied what they had learned by participating in games, cooperative learning activities, and group-cohesion tasks. The third step was the concrete experience where the students practiced the skill or action in the real world, such as the community service project and challenges. And finally, the students reflected on their observations of what it was like to learn the new skill and to practice it. Because this was a reflexive process, the counselor was able to see if the students could apply the prosocial behavior or peer relational skills. When they needed reinforcement or clarification, or if they revealed another area of need, the researcher was able to modify the curriculum to meet that need.

Participants and Setting

After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board and the school district's approval, the recruitment process began. The researcher advertised in the school

via a live presentation to the student's classes, information on the website, and a parent information night. During the parent night, the purpose and procedures were elaborated upon, and the parents and guardians had the opportunity to ask questions. Also, the parents were informed about confidentiality and its limits in a group setting, possible risks and benefits to participating in the study, and the rights of participants.

During the meeting, consent documents were given to parents/guardians and assent documents to potential student participants. Assent was obtained from all of the children, and consent was obtained from all parent/guardians. The assent document contained language at the third-grade level for the children to read and comprehend.

The inclusion criteria for this study was that any third-, fourth-, or fifth-grade student at the elementary school in traditional classes who wished to participate in an early-morning program, five times per week for 12 weeks, and for whom legal consent was obtained from a parent/guardian and child assent was given, could do so.

The exclusion criteria included students who were not in third, fourth, or fifth grade at the elementary school or who didn't garner consent or sign assent, those who chose not to participate in intervention, parents/guardians who did not agree to bring students to the program before school, students who qualified for special education services but whose Individualized Education Plan's required differentiated instruction (e.g., self-contained classrooms), or students who had limited English language skills based on remedial ELL designation.

The most appropriate sampling strategy for this study was purposeful sampling. Three considerations that were made, as suggested by Creswell (2013): the site for the study, the specific type of sampling strategy, and the size of the sample.

This site was chosen based on reported need by a school counselor colleague. This district is the third largest in New Mexico. The study took place in a school with an enrollment of 876 students as of October 2013. According to district statistics, 11.6% of the school students receive special education services, and 43% receive free or reduced lunch. The school had a high turnover rate for school counselors; the researcher was informed that this school had three different school counselors in the past three years. This was the current school counselor's first year at this school.

The study was open to all third, fourth, and fifth graders who were 8-11 years old. The specific type of sampling strategy was maximum variation. And the specific sample size was determined by the amount of participants who were interested. Based on the 15 students who signed up for participation, eight students were chosen for the first before-school group. The group consisted of five boys and three girls, of which three were in the third grade, three were in the fourth grade, and two were in the fifth grade. The students represented the overall makeup of this school, with these racial backgrounds: Hispanic (1), African-American/Hispanic (1), Caucasian (4), Asian-American (1), and Native American (1). The students were representative of the population of this elementary school and of the larger school district, which reflects a similar makeup of racial/ethnic, gender, special education, and students who receive free or reduced-price lunch services. Because this study was open to all students in traditional classroom settings, some of the students had a learning disability, and some qualified for gifted-education services. Given the nature of the study, particularly that students with disabilities are typical to all classrooms, the researcher decided that there was no need to exclude or differentiate such students. This is to say, their inclusion and participation in classroom activities was

important for the pertinence of this study to schools across the country. Maximum variation was used to “increase the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives—an ideal for qualitative research” (Creswell, 2013, p. 157).

Five of the students had been at the school since kindergarten; one had been there for two years; and for two of the students, this was their first year. The 12-week program ran for 55 days. One student made the program every day; two missed one day; three missed two days; one missed four days; and one missed five days. Overall program attendance for the group was 96%.

Data Collection Methods

Methods for data collection were consistent with qualitative evaluation methodology. The evaluation is conducted through three stages: observation, inquiry, and explanation (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). The first type of data collection is observation. The researcher created a portfolio of events before, during, and after the study. These events were recorded in the researcher’s field journal and included comments from parents, teachers, the school principal, and other things that occurred at school that could affect the study. The second step was inquiry, which involved interviewing. The purpose of interviewing was to explore and examine the participants’ perceptions of the program from their individual perspective. The interview looked in-depth at the participants’ perceptions of how the intervention was conducted through descriptors, what outside influences may affect the intervention, the advantages and disadvantages of participation, if the student has learned or changed in any way based on participation, and what it was like to participate in the intervention. Data included anything that helped the researcher

develop concepts that, in turn, led to understanding. The third stage of evaluation, the explanation, is elaborated on in the data analysis section (Clarke & Dawson, 1999).

To begin the readers' understanding of who these students were, the researcher collected data from state, district, school and personal demographics, attendance, the contents and curriculum of the before-school program, interviews with every member of the program, and researcher field notes. Data about the students themselves, such as grade, gender, and race, also were collected. The purpose of collecting this data was to show how representative this group of students was to the school population. The researcher recorded of the attendance of each participant. Data included information about the program itself; such information consisted of descriptive detail of certain portions of the before-school program that the student's recalled and commented on. Field notes from the researcher's journal elaborated on the student's experiences. The most important source of data was the interviews.

Interviews are a qualitative research tradition, and this form of data collection is useful and credible in social-sciences research (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Semistructured interviews were conducted during the last week of the program in an area removed from the other participants to ensure confidentiality. The researcher interviewed two children per day, and each interview took 16-20 minutes.

The central research question was: "How are the lived experiences of the students changed by going through the intervention?" The semistructured interview questions (Appendix C) reflected the qualitative evaluation methodology and the contents of the program. The data collected from the interviews was used to inform the findings, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The next source of data was the student responses to their journal. The intent of the journal was multipurpose. It was for the students to have a place to take notes when involved in a social skills lesson, to complete exercises, to write and draw in, and to jot ideas for the team project. Portions of the journal were not collected for data. The journals were for the students' use, and they took them home at the end of the program as a tangible resource. The data collected was in the form of verbal expressions of what the students chose to talk about as they looked through their journals. The purpose of going through the journal was to discover more about the student's experience in the program.

Specifically, the students were asked to page through their journal and comment on things they liked and didn't like and what they remembered about each activity. The researcher asked the students about their experiences in the program and recorded this via audio recording. The intent was to collect the students' perspective in describing the student experience and perception of change after participating in a before-school counselor intervention which focused on learning prosocial behaviors and developing peer relational skills. This evaluation included how they experienced the program as well as if they perceived any change in themselves after participating in the program.

The student participants were given an identifier number after the interview. The researcher was responsible for matching the student data with the correct identifier. The researcher transcribed the interviews, deleted the identifiers (names) of other students, if mentioned, in the interview, and deleted the entire interview after transcription to further ensure confidentiality. At the conclusion of each interview, based on the written notes that were being taken as well as the interviews from the audio tape, the researcher recapped the content of the interviews. The students were given the opportunity to correct

any misunderstandings or elaborate on their answers. This contributed to the interpretive validity where the meanings of actions or behaviors are validated by the participants (Maxwell, 2002).

Data Analysis

Qualitative evaluation often adopts other methods of data analysis popular in the more common forms of qualitative research.

We believe that effective evaluation depends upon evaluators having the skills to be able to draw from the broadest possible range of methods and, when appropriate, successfully mix methods in a single research design (Clarke & Dawson, 1999).

The data was analyzed in various ways (Appendix D). The process began with open coding, the most often used and familiar technique of analysis. In the open or initial coding, the researcher conceptualizes the data, often field notes, line by line (Charmaz, 2006). Open coding was used to identify and categorize the initial categories of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher placed the codes in the margins of the field notes. Open coding required conceptualizing all related incidents in order to yield many concepts (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Open coding allowed for the discovery of themes and subthemes (Creswell, 2013). This was accomplished by identifying themes in the transcriptions. First, repetition of words and phrases was noted. These phrases and words were color coded within the document. After they were color coded, they were entered onto a spreadsheet with descriptive, direct quotes. The initial categories were divided into preliminary codes of program evaluation and “other”. Other was defined as being information that did not immediately fit into the student evaluation category.

Data analysis began with the program evaluation. The procedure involved sorting the dialogue based on each activity mentioned during the interview. The exemplar pieces of the interviews were arranged under the phrases that went together (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

After the students were asked to go through their journal and comment on that the accounts they liked and didn't like and what they remembered about each activity, the analysis of the data began. The analysis of this data included both qualitative and quantitative components. The quantitative analysis included a tally of the total number of activities as well as the category the activity fell under, the total amount of recall each individual student had, the total recall each activity had, the total of activities represented by tangible artifacts in the journal, and the total activities with no representation in the journal but nevertheless were mentioned in the interview. The qualitative analysis included the students' words in describing the activities and the themes created by the researcher's study of representativeness.

The next analytic procedure was the word search, which used all of the participant dialogue to find codes. The word lists and the key-word-in-context techniques use observation of word usage to determine what the participants are saying to develop core ideas (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). The following words were searched for: feelings, share, help, hurt, empathy, plays, community service project, fun, like, sad, cooperation, friend, good, bad, helpful, and kind. The three words with the most mentions were fun (49), friend (39), and help (43).

Based on these findings, a KWIC (key-word-in-context) search was conducted to discover the contextual meanings of the words. The KWIC method finds the words that

surround these key phrases to study the way the word is used in context by the students (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). The three most-used words in the students' experience to describe the program were fun, friend, and help (along with helpful, helping, helped). An examination of the words in close proximity around fun, friend, and help allowed the researcher to further divide fun as a descriptor word, and friend and help were looked at as action words (potential a priori research constructs).

An evaluation profile matrix was created to create an overall picture of the codes. Descriptor words that had two or fewer demonstrations were condensed into positive or negative. Revisiting the transcript, the researcher coded the following keywords to begin to understand the "other" section of data outside of the program evaluation. The transcript was coded for friend, help, topics covered in program, student interpretation of materials covered in program, and non sequitur. Notes were written in the margins as they occurred to the researcher.

Then, the data was analyzed through constant comparison. Constant comparison is an analytical method that researchers use to develop themes and ultimately to generate a theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Although constant comparison was first developed for use in grounded theory, it has been adopted by other designs, including evaluative research. The constant comparison process involved the following basic steps: identify categories in events and behavior; name indicators in passage, and encode them (open coding); continually compare codes and passages to those already coded to find consistencies and differences; examine consistencies or patterns between codes to reveal categories; continue the process until the category saturates and no new codes related to it are identified; and determine which categories are the central focus (axial categories) and

thus form the core category (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Using the constant-comparative method, the researcher systematically checked for similarities and differences in the text (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Each category was identified through incidents, events, and activities that relate to the category (Creswell, 2013). These similarities and differences initially were put into a spreadsheet. Then, the data was looked at to determine if these similarities and differences fell along a continuum or dispersed in a random pattern. A visual representation of this data was created to determine how and if the ideas connected. The missing data technique allowed for identification of what may be missing outside of the obvious themes (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). This technique was employed after the other procedures were completed.

The process of thematic analysis was employed. This is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the participant meanings (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Thematic analysis can be used with evaluative research. When conducting the thematic analysis, it was important to become familiar with the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define and name themes, and produce the report. What is unique about thematic analysis is that it occurs at an intuitive level. It was through the process of immersion in data and considering connections and interconnections between codes that themes emerged that were used in the final process of explanation (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013).

A thematic analysis was conducted on the “student interpretation information.” The interview responses to the introductory, transition, key questions, and using concepts

in practice sections of the interview and were separated out to be analyzed by two separate coders. The purpose of using outside researchers to code the data was to establish intercoder reliability. The benefit of having multiple outside coders was this: “With two or more coders, we can test whether people think that the same constructs apply to the same chunks of text” (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 301). This measure of reliability allows for an increased confidence in the themes (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). The outside researchers were given a coding protocol, the 12 interview questions from this portion of the interview, and the student responses separated by envelope for each question. Constant comparison involved searching for similarities and differences between the themes discovered by the coders.

All but two of the themes picked up by the outside coders were corroborated by the researcher. A process/outcome matrix using the three main themes was created to demonstrate the “other,” which then was titled prosocial behavior and peer relational skills. These involved the analysis of metacoding. Metacoding uses a fixed set of a priori themes to discover the direction and strength of each theme (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). The transcripts were searched for demonstration of friendship, helping, and cooperation, and then were further divided into concept, action, and student experience with the construct. The student experiences of the “other” fall under the a priori themes of prosocial behavior and peer relational skills.

And finally, constant comparison was used again to analyze the data which was uniquely interpreted by the students. This material is of interest to determine the differences between what originally was taught to how it was recontextualized by the

students. Comparing these unique interpretations between students allowed for an examination of potential distal outcomes for individuals.

This type of evaluative analysis is highly interpretive. The researcher's aim was to understand the situation and to discover theory implicit in the data. This will be accomplished by looking for key phrases. The researcher used sorting by reading and re-reading notes, which uncovered categories and their interrelationships through a comparative and inductive process. From the process of sorting, the researcher then generated explanation and recommendations. The final data report was organized around recommendations, often in a traditional format (Elliott & Kushner, 2007). These recommendations are elaborated upon in Chapter 5.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is seen as congruent with ideas that fit a critical, rational perspective in qualitative research. Researchers cannot separate themselves what they know in their search for objectivity (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Establishing trustworthiness in the quality of the research was important in this qualitative study, especially because the interpretation was high. To promote trustworthiness, the researcher practiced reflexivity, prolonged engagement with the participants, created an audit trail, peer examination, and promoted quality and robustness by testing and confirming qualitative findings with credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability (including triangulation).

Reflexivity was demonstrated by providing an examination of the researchers' positionality within the dissertation because the perspective of the researcher shapes everything. This declaration of biases, assumptions, and previous experiences was

detailed in the dissertation. However, as Creswell (2013) suggested, the second part of reflexivity is to discuss how these experiences, biases, and assumptions can shape the researcher's interpretation. This demonstration of reflexivity occurred in the findings section of the manuscript.

Prolonged engagement is crucial in the creation of trust and rapport among the researcher and the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher spent almost 50 hours with the students in this study. And because of the nature of the discussions, the researcher knew a great deal of information about their families, their friends, and their unique personalities. The gold standard for ensuring quality in a research project is embodied by four concepts: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility implies that the findings represent some sense of reality. For qualitative research, the reality is the participant's reality. Credibility was established by persistent observation and member checks. The students were asked about the content and context of the interview to check for mutual understanding.

Understanding that being true to the findings (whether significant or not) was vital in establishing credibility. To prime for that, the researcher wrote memos in the researcher's field journal about her perception of students' impressions of the program as it was happening. Reflexivity on the part of the researcher and prolonged engagement with the student participants garnered greater credibility of the research findings.

Creating an audit trail involved developing a description of the entire research process, from the start to the final reporting. The researcher kept records of raw data, analysis products, structure of themes and categories findings, a final report, process notes, memos, and protocol schedules (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). This

approach helped the researcher to remember important events and retrace steps, if necessary. The audit trail also included the researcher's field journal and the intervention curriculum.

Peer examination is an external audit that involves reviewing the phases of the research to confirm suitability (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). In an external audit, an expert not involved in the process examines the processes and products. Two external coders, both of whom have years of experience in counseling and research, audited the data to determine themes. This peer examination promoted interrater reliability. The expert checked accuracy and ensured that findings and interpretations were supported by data. This approach allows the reader to feel confident, because an expert outsider who is theoretically objective will be passing judgment about the worth of the research (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Also, because this research was part of the dissertation process, not only one, but four experts, examined the study for accuracy.

Dependability required the researcher to document the research context, making clear the changes that occurred while the research was ongoing. This was done in the curriculum book for changes in the lessons or agenda from day to day. And the changes and perception of the student's reactions were documented in the field journal. Confirmability meant the researcher remained neutral during data analysis and interpretation. The term implies that the researchers should demonstrate that their results could or should be confirmed or corroborated by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability and confirmability were determined with an audit, where an outside expert reviews the analysis and themes to ensure that conceptual decisions stayed true to the

data and were not biased (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability was enhanced through the audit trail, and confirmability was improved with the peer examination.

And finally, triangulation, is the strategy which uses multiple measurements to attain greater accuracy of results. It is often used in evaluation research designs (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). This study used different methods of data collection to collect demographics about the setting of the school and personal data of the students, interviews, student perception of the journal, and the researcher's field notes. Also, because eight students were interviewed, the data can be validated through multiple members who answer the same interview questions.

Transferability infers that findings may have applications in similar situations elsewhere. The responsibility of demonstrating transferability is believed to rest with the future researchers who wish to apply the results to different situations. Dependability requires the researcher to document the research context, making clear the changes that occur while the research is ongoing. This was done in the curriculum book for changes in the lessons or agenda from day to day. And the changes and perceptions of the students' reactions were documented in the field journal. Trustworthiness is vital to establishing quality research. It has been demonstrated throughout this study through multiple methods. The findings have gone through checks to assure credibility, reliability, dependability, and confirmability.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to ascertain select students' experiences and perceptions of change after participating in a before-school counselor-led intervention. The intervention was designed to ameliorate students' prosocial behaviors and peer relational skills. The design used for this study allowed the researcher to capture any changes in the students' perceptions about self and the experience of the intervention after participating in the intervention. Qualitative methods often are used in evaluations because they tell the program's story by capturing and communicating the participants' stories (Patton, 2003, p. 2). The purpose of this type of method is to illuminate the process and outcomes of a program. The intent of qualitative findings is to deepen understanding through the eyes of the participants or to "put faces on the statistics to deepen understanding" (Patton, 2003, p. 2). The voices of the students who participated in this study allow for a deeper understanding of their experience. Through their words, the researcher interpreted key factors of the process of the program and its outcomes.

In this chapter, the author presents key findings obtained from the eight interviews that represented all participants in the before-school program as well as student and school demographics, student attendance, the contents of the before-school program, and researcher field notes. Six major findings emerged from this study

Students found four concepts to be most meaningful: conflicted feelings, finding support, friendship skills, and the difficulty of mending hurt feelings. With that is the subfinding that essential ingredients to student recall are activities that were repeated,

novel, and fun. The second finding was that the students found the before-school program to be a positive experience that was not dependent upon the researcher. The biggest challenge for the student participants who represented different ages and maturity levels was learning how to work together on tasks that required high levels of communication, cooperation, and problem solving. The third finding was that students learned how to use intentional actions when making friends and being a friend. The fourth finding was that all of the students experienced helping others, which made them feel good about themselves. The fifth finding was that the students understood that cooperation requires working together and mutual participation. It became difficult for the students to cooperate when structures were not in place, such as rules, clear directions, communication, leadership, and everyone participating in a collective effort. The sixth finding was students reported unique demonstrations of being changed for the better by the before-school program.

The six major findings are elaborated on in the next section. The findings were discovered through a rigorous investigation of the student experience, described in their own words. Evaluation research was well suited to understand the process of this before-school program. The student responses were used to provide thick description. Historically, qualitative evaluation uses thick description to provide ample detail of the experience of the participant. Specifically, qualitative evaluation examines the interviews, asking: “What does this mean? What insights and answers are provided about the central evaluation question?” (Patton, 2003, p. 11). This use of participant voice was designed to help the reader better understand the worldview of the students. When working with students’ aged 8-11, the researcher found that it was important to understand their

specific understandings based on the context of their individual personalities, relationships to other members of the group, and how they related to the material presented to them in the program.

Finding 1: Students found four concepts to be most meaningful: conflicted feelings, finding support, friendship skills, and the difficulty of mending hurt feelings.

The 12-week, before-school program was centered on specific concepts of prosocial behavior and peer-relational skills. These concepts were consideration of feelings, sharing, being helpful, friendship, being liked by other children, standing up for yourself, empathy, kindness, cooperation, and depending on others. To develop understanding, practice, and implementation of these concepts, different learning strategies were adopted. During this program, there were 52 separate learning stimulus: 16 discussion worksheets, five expressive arts projects, 15 games, two writing prompts, eight cooperative learning activities, and six group relational tasks. The purpose of these learning stimulus was to provide the students who have different learning styles to find something they would be able to access. The intent when designing the program was to be able to reach all students at their different levels. Some students felt more comfortable with the didactic activities that involved discussion and worksheets. This is something they will be very familiar with because it is used in the classroom environment. Some students were more tactile and enjoyed drawing and coloring to express emotions, and this was where the expressive arts tasks were implemented. Most students enjoy being active and like to participate in games. All of the games were designed with a social-emotional component so that while they may have been playing traditionally familiar games, for example, Simon Says, the participants were instructed to play “Respect Simon

Says” where they were asked to mimic the leader doing things that demonstrated respect. This included such things as shaking hands, asking how they are, and inviting them to sit down. The writing prompts were designed to provide the students a time to reflect on what they had learned and to write down their thoughts. This activity represented more of a traditional journal entry. The eight cooperative learning activities involved working together as a collective toward a single goal. These included creating rules for good sportsmanship and most of the community service tasks. Students were required to brainstorm, compromise, and commit to some action as a group. Finally, the six group-relational tasks were designed to allow the students to develop friendship skills by understanding each other as individuals. The intent was to have them learn more about each individual in the group to strengthen their bond and create group cohesion.

To make meaning based on the student experiences of how these constructs and the activities that went along with them were perceived, the data had to be disaggregated. To begin this process, student recall was assessed. The first measurement was the overall student recollection of specific activities. Recollection or recall was measured when the student talked about or mentioned something they remembered about the program, both with and without a prompt or reminder of the specific activity. It was important to measure. When students verbalized the information they retained, this was a direct association to what they had learned. If the students could recall an event or activity without being reminded, it was measured as something that was memorable. Also, when the students were provided with a visual prompt, their journal, the description of the details, and the purpose of the activity was associated with learning. This was the first step of discovering what was or was not meaningful for the students.

When the students did not demonstrate recall of an event, they would say either “I don’t know” or “I don’t remember this one,” or they wouldn’t say anything at all. Only 14 activities received no mention from any student during the interviews. Those 14 were seven games (treasure hunt, ribbon activity, balloon loft challenge, no eyes/no hands game, puzzle “joiners,” body language game, family feud); two cooperative learning activities (community service brainstorm and cooperation with paper clips); two discussions (stories of empathy and identifying problems); and three group relational activities (empathy scenarios, showing interest in others, and kindness cards). The great majority of the activities were not represented in tangible form in the participants’ journals, which may have decreased the recall of such events. However, because there is no record of student recall for these activities, it can be deduced that they did not have an impact on the students.

There were two measurements of recall; one occurred prior to receiving the journals, and one occurred while the students looked through the journals. Prior to receiving their journals to look through, the students were asked: What was your favorite thing about the before-school program? The responses related to specific activities were the penny drive, bottle across the room (nuclear waste activity), making books, games, worksheets, response game, and speeches in the classes. The more specific question about recall was: Can you give me an example of something you remember from this program? Their responses provided much more data about their experiences of the before-school program.

P7: “Playing that apples to apples game. Speaking, speaking in the classrooms, like playing that Halloween like party thing. Um, um...making the airplanes, um, playing that game like the leader with Simon Says.”

P6: "Umm, I remember like how to respond to something and not to be rude, like not to be rude but just to say it nicely at the same time."

P1: "Playing twister. (Researcher: Do you remember when we did that?) Um-hum, when making the, for Halloween. And making a book."

P5: "I remember that we write in books. And we have a lot of fun working together writing in them."

P2: "The challenges. And the little booklets that we made. And then our folders and the Watermelon Ranch of course. And the toxic waste thing, that was, that was helping others. And cooperating."

P4: "uh, we decorated our folders. That was the first thing we did."

P8: "Um, We, when we had the number, like one through eight. And when everybody was here we could, we could only stay on the black. (Researcher: The shark line?) Yeah. We had to go through everybody to get to you in order."

P3: "um, the standing up for yourself and cooperating and the Halloween activities which was being a good sportsmanship or sportsman, whatever."

Prior to receiving their journals to look over, the responses were much more about the games and community-service activity. Students were asked, without prompts, what they remembered or their favorite thing, and many of those things were detailed without descriptors. This researcher posits that there is a potential for a more meaningful connection to these activities because there was no tangible cue to trigger memory. The challenges required the students to apply what they had learned and practiced in the group environment. There were four challenges that the students were asked to complete, and we discussed them as a group. That real-world experience may have been memorable for the students. The first was that the community-service speeches to the classrooms were memorable and provided for some students an opportunity to develop their communication skills. The penny drive occurred throughout the program; we discussed it regularly, and during the final week, they had to count the pennies so it was not surprising that they would remember this without prompting. The nuclear waste activity was recalled because it was their first introduction to the program as it was presented during the recruitment and parent presentation. The airplane building, Shark Bridge,

Halloween games, and Respect Simon Says/Follow the Leader were physical, cooperative group games that may have generated greater recall.

The activity that was recalled the most without mention in the journals was the Respond game, which was adapted from the Ready, Set, Respond game (www.socialskillscentral.com). This game fit into the curriculum very well with a few modifications, and the students requested to play it repeatedly. If student recall is low, it can be presumed that the activity was not meaningful, but if recall is high, it can be presumed that the activity was meaningful to the students. However, it is important to differentiate between remembered items, which the researcher speculates has made an impact but in many cases were not described, and prompted items, many of which were labeled with descriptors.

The majority of the data about the specifics of the activities in the program was demonstrated in the section of the interview where the students were told by the researcher to go through their journal folder, which they had not seen since they first put their names on it and decorated it. As they reviewed the contents, they were instructed to talk about what they saw, describe what it was, and whether they liked it.

Of the 52 activities, 28 were represented in tangible form within the journals. These artifacts included the 16 worksheets, five expressive arts projects, the two writing prompts, three group relational tasks and two cooperative learning activities. Based on this section of the interview, the students recalled and discussed between eight and 18 activities or events from the before-school program; the mean rate of recall was 11.62 items. Participant 1 remembered nine activities; P2 recalled 13 activities; P3 recalled 18 activities; P4 recalled 10 activities; P5 recalled nine activities; P6 recalled 12 activities;

P7 recalled eight activities; and P8 recalled 14 activities. There was no discernable pattern among age or gender for the total number of activities recalled.

To get a better understanding of the student experience, the researcher examined the activities that were mentioned by all eight of the participants. Four activities were unanimously recalled and were found to influence each student participant. Specifically, the students were most influenced by the concept of feeling multiple ways about something, discussing who supports them and how, asking questions to get to know someone as the building block of friendship, and understanding how kind words can help someone whose feelings had been hurt.

The following is a description of the four activities were unanimously recalled and/or discussed by each student in the group. The first activity fell under the theme of discussion worksheets. The activity was called “mixed emotions,” and it took place in Week 2 where the theme was the consideration of other’s feelings. The second was an expressive arts activity called “Who is on your team?” It took place during Week 5, when the theme was friendship. The third activity that was unanimously mentioned was a group relational task called “What I know about _____” (participant’s name). It was also during Week 5. Finally, a cooperative learning activity called Alex’s Heart took place during Week 8, when the theme was kindness.

Mixed emotions

The “mixed emotions” discussion took place in Week 2, when the theme was consideration of others feelings. The discussion focused around how people can have more than one feeling at the same time. These feelings can be confusing, especially for children, who may have a more difficult time understanding the nuances of emotional states. One

example that was discussed was if Mom brought home a new baby. The children might feel excited about the new arrival but also might feel jealous that the new baby will take up all of Mom's time. The students then were asked to complete the mixed-emotions handout with each other to foster discussion. All eight recalled the activity, but three of them acknowledged it without detailed comment. The others said:

P3: "And this one, um, this one was feelings. So we could do, um, feelings like so for example if you had to think of what they would feel."

P7: "It was where, like, um, make you feel something like you feel happy then you feel kind of bad."

P2: "Ok, like oh yeah, I won the baseball game, but I also feel sad because that kid got hit on the face with the ball."

P6: "I remember doing this like I remember you mean mixed emotions like I feel sad that my field trip was cancelled, but I also feel happy because my favorite cousin is coming. So yeah."

P8: "These were a little bit easy."

Most of those who commented understood the connection between mixed emotions and feelings. One student was able to demonstrate personalization of the information. He used an example of what happened in his real life to apply to the lesson of "mixed emotions." He felt happy that he won the baseball game but sad that someone was hurt. Although he was the only one to mention a personalized connection to the concept, most of the students were able to understand how one event could make them feel two ways. The remaining comments were demonstrations of content, for example, they said, "think of what they would feel" and "make you feel something, like, you feel happy then you feel kind of bad" and "I feel sad that my field trip was cancelled but I also feel happy because my favorite cousin is coming." During this week, the purpose was to try and get the students to understand another's perspective and determine the way they might feel about having mixed emotions. That someone could feel multiple ways about something had proven to be readily understood and in fact "a little bit easy."

Who is on your team?

The support team exercise was adapted from an activity that the researcher created for use in school counseling groups. The original was titled “Who’s On Your Team?” (Rogers, 2014) and was adapted for use with the before-school program. In Week 5, the theme was friendship; this expressive arts activity prompted the students to create a picture of five people who support them and illustrate how they support them. The definition of support team was people who have the students’ best interest at heart.

P6: “That was fun cause you guys got to know who I was and who my support team was and who supports me the most.”

P5: “Oh, I didn’t know most of their names then.”

P2: “Yeah, all my friends. Oh my gosh, if we were on a team or something. I could use that for showing other people how they support me.”

P7: “A, friends? Um, someone, like to look up to.”

P4: “Uh, yeah. The one we did with our friends.”

P8: “Yeah, this is when we had to write our family members that would make you happy or cheer you on at a game.”

P3: “Yes. Um, we did, how people support you. And we wrote down five or more people. And told you how they supported you.”

The students had a high level of recall for activities, where they offered specific detail, such as “five or more,” “happy or cheer you on,” “friends,” and “family members.” P5 was absent on the first day this assignment was described so his assumption was that he was to use only the names of the students within the group as part of his support team. The students understood that this was a demonstration of how others support them, such as “you guys got to know who I was and who my support team was,” “showing other people how they support me,” and “told you how they supported us.”

What I know about _____ activity

“What I know about _____ activity” was an intentional instructional activity for students to learn how to make the connection between joining a group and remembering what they know about a person to form a friendship. The students were asked to write everything they know about each group member, with the following prompts: What do they like? What do they dislike? What do we have in common? Do they have any interests that you have experience with?

The focus of this activity was on increasing group cohesion. The intent was for the students to understand what they knew about each other and to refocus on others instead of on self. Because of the reflexive nature of this before-school group, the researcher continually monitored the pace and level of understanding that the group showed after each activity. Students would demonstrate their understanding of the concept through words and actions. The “what I know about _____ activity” was created as a result of the “joining a group” activity.

In Week 5, the students were asked to build a puzzle but the members were divided into puzzle builders, observers and one joiner. The role of the puzzle builder was to work on the puzzle and the observers watched the action between the puzzle builders and the joiner. The observers were also able to help the joiner figure out the best way to join the puzzle builders. However, the joiner was the only person who was there to try and join the group. The joiner would try to engage the puzzle builders to include them in the group. The puzzle builders were busy working on the puzzle, which became a challenge for the joiner to interrupt them and to convince them to pay attention. The

joiner could come over to the observers and ask for suggestions about how to join their group. Here's an entry from the researcher's field journal:

Very good lesson for "joiners"--felt it was hard to join group. P5 came up with best idea to get to P4: to talk to him about minecraft. Very intuitive. Decided to change tomorrow to keep learning about this--having kids address what they know about each other to better determine how to approach them in a group setting. (written 10/23/2014)

This decision to further the practice of learning how to join a group emerged after the "joining a group" activity. The students were asked to write as many things as they could remember about each person in the group. These sheets then were collected by the researcher. After receiving the notes that the students had written on each other's clipboard, it was discovered that there were inflammatory remarks about one of the students. Here's an entry about that in the researcher's field journal:

They wrote most of the time and then we met in circle. I read what P5 said about P3. "She is not my friend" [the entry actually went on and on that she is not nice, I don't like her, etc.]. I brought this to the attention of the group, and the student who had written the derogatory words said that P3 told him she said she wasn't his friend the first day. P7 corroborated [his] story. P3 said she was joking, but I talked about how jokes can hurt. I told them I wouldn't read about what they wrote [out loud to the class]. I would think about it over the weekend. (written 10/24/2014)

Because of the unkind words written under one of this student's names, the researcher decided that a second version of the exercise was needed. The intent of the original activity was to recall information that they had learned in the five weeks they had been together so that they could build a better understanding of one another as the basis of friendships. However, this activity did not prove to have the intended results. It did not represent the building blocks of friendship. Instead, it might have been hurtful for the student.

A second version of this activity then was created. The students were provided with prompts on small cards. On the cards were shown a picture of something and the words that describe it. For example, there were a hippopotamus, a kite, roller skating, and

a tree. The students were to choose one of the cards from a bag and ask a question about the card. For example: Have you ever seen a hippo before? Do you like roller skating or ice skating better? Have you ever flown a kite? What is your favorite kind of tree? After the students heard the responses, the student asking the question wrote down their answers. The purpose was to help the students learn how to ask questions, listen to responses, and remember enough to write them down. The students learned how to go beyond their own observations and assumptions about each other and ask unusual questions that might be interesting.

During the interview, all eight participants recalled the activity: three made no comment, two found it to be fun, and one said it was hard. But two respondents said:

P3: (Version 1) “I thought it was kind of bad but good at the same time.” (Version 2) “I liked this one better than the other one because I, um, we had to tell them a story. Like a story about yourself that you didn’t get to do that on the other one because they had to remember stuff about you that you’ve never, that you, and write something that you never told them.”

P6: “It was fun cause I got to know if they really knew who I was and what I liked. So that was fun.” (Researcher: What was the difference between the two versions?) “This one didn’t have that much” (points to the first version). “I think that right here they knew much, knew a lot more than they knew before.”

The students said their experiences in this activity were “memorable,” “fun,” and “hard,” but the most impactful result was that they could discern, by asking questions, the difference between the surface-level understanding of someone versus friendship built on a deeper understanding.

Alex’s Heart

The final activity fell under the theme of cooperative learning. During Week 8, we focused on the concept of kindness. The students took turns reading a book in which the main character had many bad things happen to him throughout the day. As the

students read about each new incident in which the boy was hurt, the researcher ripped up a large heart with the boy's name on it and gave it to the reader. This activity was adapted from an exercise called The Heart Story (www.teachablemoment.org). The students were instructed to come up with something they could say to the boy for each incident that would be kind and have a positive impact on him. After all of the students had written down their acts of kindness on the back of their piece of the heart, they were told to try to put the heart back together. The students found this to be a challenge because ripped paper is not easily reassembled. Some of the students became frustrated, but the researcher encouraged them to keep going. Here's an entry from the researcher's field journal:

Had kids put Alex's heart back together with tape. Mostly put together with holes and parts that don't go together perfectly. Kids worked well together. Most contributing the whole time. Asked if they knew about symbolism. Explained how bad days/bad things tore Alex's heart up. And their good suggestions helped put it back together, but it was not the same. Kids quiet during this explanation--seemed to have meaning for them (written 11/21/2014).

The students reflected on the activity in this way:

P3: "I thought it was hard to put the puzzle together, but I liked reading the story and that. And writing the things [kind words to Alex] down."

P5: "He was bad, and he didn't feel good. Because he was having the worst day of his life. We tried to fix up his heart. We couldn't find all the pieces."

P6: "Yeah, and we had to put it all together. It was fun. It was hard cause you had to like really communicate. I think that some of the pieces were not fitting. To show how you could hurt somebody so bad that he just breaks down, and he doesn't go so good."

P1: "We took apart, like it, all the bad things that happened to him, we take it apart, and then we only had a little piece, so we put it back together. It was cool; it was fun."

P7: "Well, that is the heart. That's Alex's heart when we read the book, and each time he got hurt we took off a piece, and then we we wrote kind stuff around it. And taped it back together."

P2: "There are some things in life that can't go back together."

P4: "That was hard."

P8: "This is where we read a book about Alex, and, um, we had to try and put his heart back together, and it didn't come out."

Many of the students mentioned putting the heart “back together” and described it as “hard” and “fun.” And many of them reflected on the fact that it didn’t look the same after it had been torn up. The students remembered the action of trying to put the heart back together, but only two mentioned that they were to write kind words on the back of the heart to help Alex; the students wrote “writing the things down” and “we wrote kind stuff around it.”

As demonstrated previously by the children’s own words, they expressed the difficulty of putting the heart back together in its original form and the deeper understanding that it could not be repaired to look like its original form. This was a complex task that involved recall of the story, which demonstrated remembering the activity. The children thought about and verbally demonstrated what they could say or do to help Alex feel better during the group discussion. They wrote their ideas on their scrap of paper. They used teamwork and communication to rebuild the heart, which was demonstrated when they were observed working together and encouraging each other during the activity. And finally, three of the children voiced an understanding of the symbolism and purpose of the activity when they said, “There are some things in life that can’t go back together,” and “To show how you could hurt somebody so bad that he just breaks down and he doesn’t go so good,” and “This is where we read a book about Alex and, um, we had to try and put his heart back together, and it didn’t come out.”

Subfinding: An essential ingredient to student recall was activities that were repeated, novel, and fun.

It is important to understand how the students used their own words to evaluate the contents of the before-school program. Some 52 separate activities took place during

the 12-week program. Student recall of the activities took the form of general statements, such as P3 saying, “I remember this” or P8 saying “I remember this, this is a book about our lives.” Another form of recall came in the evaluative descriptors, such as P5 saying, “Fun. I loved the faces that I made on them” or P4 saying “That was awesome.” The student also would express recall with a description of what the activity was, such as P3 saying, “And then this one we were doing body language so we had to draw a face to match what they were feeling and then come up with an example based on yourself” or P2 saying, “To show your emotions. Like if you were sad, you would do this; if you were happy, you would do this; if you were angry, you would do this.”

The final form of recall was when students described the activity and expressed what they thought about it, such as P6 saying, “I remember having, when we had to do this, somebody else had to, you had to tell them what you like, you have to fill this out and you like, we could test each other and see what they remembered. You had to like take a little quiz. Yeah, I liked this. It’s fun” or P3 saying, “Oh, I like the positive and negative impact’s worksheet. Yeah, so if you, um, do something that’s mean, that would be a negative impact, and if you do something like help someone with homework that could be a positive impact and a negative impact.”

The students recalled many of the activities that were new to them. New activities were labeled novel by the researcher. Student recall was high for activities that were repeated throughout the intervention. For example, the challenges which were done five times and the community service penny drive which was worked on repeatedly. The activities that were labeled fun by the students or perceived as new or done repeatedly were high in student recall.

Finding 2: The students found the before-school program to be a positive experience, which was not dependent upon the researcher.

The majority (86%) of the descriptors used to evaluate this program were positive, with “fun” being the most used descriptor at 41 uses. To discover the codes, the KWIC (key-words-in-context) method was employed, and the three most-used words in the students’ experience to describe the program were “fun,” “friends,” and “help,” (along with helpful, helping, helped).

The word “fun” was used to describe the overall program 17 times by seven of the participants. One did not use the word “fun” to describe the program but instead used “good” and “like.” For the participants, the description of fun included the more specific components of the program as well. The word “fun” was used to describe the discussion/handouts, expressive arts activities, cooperative learning activities, and group relational tasks. Interestingly, the writing prompts were not recalled as being fun and in fact were not mentioned by any of the students, whether positive or negative.

An evaluative matrix based on descriptive words was created (Appendix E). The 100 descriptors were segmented into the different words that the students used to describe the program. There were 10 categories of descriptors: fun, good, hard, easy, like, awesome, negative, positive, happy, and cool. Those descriptors fell under the following areas: overall program, community service, and program activities. These program activities were narrowed down further to specific comments related to specific areas within the program: expressive arts, games, discussion/handouts, group relational tasks, cooperative learning, and writing prompts.

Two students made the connection between fun and learning.

P5: “My favorite thing is I get to make the ton of friends quickly, learn how to be a good friend, and have a lot of fun doing it.”

P6: “It was really fun because you made it into games, which made it like, it didn’t make it seem like a boring old lesson. You just, like, made it feel like you are having fun and learning at the same time.”

This concept was mentioned several times during their interviews by those two students. Learning while having fun was seen as a positive factor that added to the students’ experience.

Three different times during the interviews, the students were given prompts to discuss specifically the activities and exercises in the program and to evaluate them. The first prompt was with the open-ended question: What was your favorite thing about the program? The responses fell into two categories: specific activities and friendship with one outlier who mentioned P7 “when we did the speeches in the classes,” which was a reference to the community-service activity. Specific activities included the penny drive, the nuclear waste activity, making the books, and the Respond game.

The second question that related directly to the content within the program was: What was something you wished was different about the before-school activity? The responses did not provide enough data to draw conclusions about how the students would have liked something different. Most of the responses lacked suggestions for improvement. Four students said nothing should be changed or they don’t know if anything should be changed. Two wished the activity would have lasted longer; that response did not describe a negative quality to the program. Only one student, P8, had a specific example of a difference—wishing the activity had been more active, saying “like doing a lot more standing up or games.” Another student wanted free breakfast. The students were asked whether they believed the length of the program was too long, too

short, or just right. Four students said it was too short, and four reported it was just right. None of the students said it was too long. Here's what two students who wanted it to be longer said:

P5: "Yeah, cause it's too much fun being with you."

P7: "I wish it was throughout the year."

The researcher examined the use of the word "you." For much of the time, the students used it as a third person: "You had to draw this." But there were two ways that students used "you" to describe the researcher. The first was the "you" being another person who is part of the program. When the student said, "It's too much fun being with you," it suggested that he understood that the researcher was a part of the "fun" of the program. Student P6 said, "It was, it it's really fun because I didn't really know how to handle some of the things that you taught us, but now I really know how to handle em and how to act with what is happening and how to help people." P6 also said, "It was really fun because you made it into games, which made it like, it didn't make it seem like a boring old lesson. You just, like, made it feel like you are having fun and learning at the same time." These comments reflected the students' understanding that what the researcher was doing was teaching these concepts by making what they needed to learn into a "game." This fifth grade student understood the researcher's role in adding fun to the "boring old lesson."

The positive student experience theme was further developed when the researcher asked, "If you were to tell another student about the before-school program, how would you describe it?" and the student said:

P6: "I'd be all, you should go to this really, really cool program in the morning, it talks about cooperation, friendship, and sticking up for others, and how to deal with other stuff. Um, it's really fun, I think you should try because I learned a lot from it."

That the students' experience of the before-school program was positive was demonstrated in many through the responses during the interviews. It was particularly their choice of words in describing the program and its components that made their feelings clear. The positive reaction to the before-school program was not dependent on the researcher. This was based on the lack of inclusion of the researcher as a component of the program. But the majority of the students did not mention the researcher during the interviews. This finding gives merit to the understanding that it was not just this researcher who could conduct such a program. This particular researcher was not integral to the success of the program. When evaluating the program as a whole, it is important to make this distinction because of the implications for efficacy in other settings with other people implementing the intervention.

Subfinding: The biggest challenge for the student participants who represented different ages and maturity levels was learning how to work together on tasks that required high levels of communication, cooperation, and problem solving.

Some 100 descriptors were used by the students to evaluate the before-school program--86 were positive and 14 were negative. The most divisive program activity category was the group relational tasks, with 14 positive and seven negative. Overall, a trend emerged. There were 14 descriptors of the group relational tasks (fun, good, easy, like, awesome, and really well), and seven participants found them to be hard, bad, or silly. There were six group relational tasks during the program. Specifically, three participants mentioned that cooperating and working together were hard, which led to the more negative descriptors of the group relational tasks.

Although it was important to understand the positive experiences, which were the majority, understanding the negative descriptors was important in giving all students a voice in this study. The most divisive program activity was the group relational tasks, which required a high level of student communication, cooperation, and problem solving.

One fifth grader reflected on his issue in cooperating with groups:

P8: "Well, because they (two participants) put their hands on you and always, they always want to be their decision."

This student response was an example of the difference in the maturity levels between third graders and fifth graders. The three third graders in this group had the most difficulty in respecting the personal space of the other participants.

When conducting the interviews, it was noted that the third-grade students had a higher rate of non sequiturs. Responses from the interview were labeled non sequitur when the statement did not relate to what was previously said during the interview and was not related to the study. P4 made 21 non sequitur statements during the interview; P5 made 18. P1 made the fewest number of statements overall. The three third-grade students' verbal responses to the interview questions were the least developed and/or the students were the most distracted. For example, P1 often gave very brief responses, such as "It was good" or "Um, it was like, um." Several times, P1 only nodded to indicate a "yes" answer or shook her head for a "no" answer. P4 responded to the question that asked if she would like to see something different in the program by saying, "They didn't get that much money. I wish I had more pennies. 'Cause I'm collecting a lot of quarters, the state's". And P5, when asked how the program compared to others in which he had participated, said, "I can find, I know one thing that is related to this program, what's related is usually me and at my house, there is a ton of laundry and in that room there is a

ton of laundry. We make a great mountain of laundry, on the great mount, we could even make the Great Wall of China of laundry. We make a mountain of it, a mini mountain.”

The responses differed between the 8 year olds and the 10 and 11 year olds. The level of comprehension for the specific constructs, for example, cooperation, was different based on the students’ age when they described an example of cooperation. However, most of the statements were made by the fourth and fifth graders, with the exception of the unanimously mentioned activities. While reading the transcripts, it was apparent that the third graders reacted to their journal entries with positive but general statements such as “It was cool” or “It was fun.” At times, the students got distracted with the contents of the journal “I messed up on some.” Although the students showed comprehension and retention of each activity; as a collective, the third-grade students were not able to demonstrate a verbal understanding of such concepts as well as the fourth and fifth graders.

The original intent of having three grade levels in the program was to increase the diversity of participants, which potentially would offer the opportunity for the students to gain an understanding and appreciation for children of other ages and who had different needs and strengths. The students did learn how to work with one another despite their age and maturity differences. However, their difference in ages did generate the majority of the negative evaluations. Learning how to work together, especially for the children who showed different levels of maturity, was the biggest challenge the group faced. The researcher noted a gradual change in their group behavior, but it required a great deal of discussion and practice. The researcher often used what was happening in the moment to

discuss how this behavior impacted the rest of the group. As these discussions became a routine part of the group process, the students were able to self-regulate a little better.

Finding 3: Students learned how to use intentional actions when making and being a friend.

The majority of students (seven of the eight) demonstrated the peer relational skill of making or learning to be a friend conceptually. And all eight students understood friendship as an action (play, be, ask, etc.). The students experienced positive feelings when learning how to be a good friend.

Using the key word analysis helped not only to develop ideas about the students' experience with the after-school program. This analysis uncovered the student perception of the program itself, but two of the concepts—friendship and helping—elicited a deeper connection and were mentioned more frequently. The concept of friends or friendship was represented 39 times in the transcripts of the interviews.

Students demonstrated an understanding of the concept of friendship. The components of friendship were represented by P1 saying, "I liked that I made new friends" and P7 saying, "Like, it's like um, (long pause), I learned how to make friends better." Meeting new people was a component of friendship for P2, who said, "Meeting new people and actually being friends." As for being social as a demonstration of friendship, P3 said, "It tells you how to socialize with other people..." Being respectful as a key to friendship, P4 said, "Umm.... It tells you, um uhh, more about like, how to interact with others. And how to be more respectful. The benefits of friendship were demonstrated by P5, who said, "I notice that having friends and playing with them is more fun than playing by yourself." As for learning how to use words to build

friendships, P5 said “Umm, I remember like how to respond to something and not to be rude like not to be rude but just to say it nicely at the same time.”

The student who did not conceptualize the meaning of friendship during the interview spoke more about his family than about concepts that included using words such as to make a friend, to learn how to be a friend, to meet friends, how to socialize, interact, be respectful, respond without being rude, and learning better to make friends. He said, “Yeah, this is when we had to write our family members that would make you happy or cheer you on at a game.” Although he did understand the action of making a friend, he said, “Ask him to play with me. And play with my friends.”

All of the students were able to demonstrate friendship in action. This specific prompt was given during the interview: Please tell me what you would do for this example. A new student has arrived in your class. He isn't talking to anyone, and by the third day, you notice that he sits next to the classroom door at recess and doesn't play with any other kids. What do you think you could do?

P4: “Try to be, be a friend to him. By shaking his hand in greeting him. And just how you normally make a friend.”

P8: “Ask him to play with me. And play with my friends.”

P5: “Ask him if he wants to play tag. Ask him what his favorite game is. And ask him why are you sitting down at the door during recess.”

P3: “I would ask him to play at recess and if he wanted to be friends. And then try to cheer him up.”

P2: “I could probably see what it is going on, what's going wrong with him. I could see what's, is anything wrong, like if his family or something, or if he doesn't like the school. Or if he's just scared to make new friends. So I'd probably try to make new friends and see what his actions are...”

P6: “I could ask him if he wants to play with us. And just like try to help him, and be like yeah come play with us because I notice that you're just sitting here, and we really want to play with you so can you come play with us for a little bit. And I would ask him like a, what and you play with anybody? What do you just um why do you sit there?”

P1: "I can play with him. Uh, I can ask him to be my friend."

P7: "Ask him to play or sit next to him at lunch. Ask him to play with my friends and like talk with him in class. If we had the chance, if we get partners in something, I could choose him."

The students understood the actions "shaking his hand, ask, play, cheer him up, help him, sit next to him, talk, choose him" of friendship. Using concepts discussed in the program, all of the students came up with different ways based on their personalities and what they felt comfortable doing. Some of the students would invite the student to play, while others would want to find out the reason for him not playing. One student went so far as to speculate why he might not be playing with others. P7 came up with the creative solution of saying, "If we get [to pick] partners in something, I could choose him."

Friendship and the process of making a friend through action was a topic that was discussed many times over the 12 weeks. And while friendship was not an unfamiliar topic with them, understanding the intentional actions that it takes to make a friend or notice someone who does not have friends was something new. The students went from a general understanding of "friends" to a more specific understanding of what a good friend looks like, how to make friends, how people support the students and how to stand up for themselves with those who might be considered "friends."

Five students demonstrated a connection between understanding the concept of friendship, what the "action" of friendship looks like, and how it had positive results.

For example:

P1: "I like meeting friends and doing stuff that I've never done before."

P2: "Cause I've had several other friends now that we talked about the friends thing."

While the students began the program with a general understanding of how to make friends, the specific actions that we practiced in the program were demonstrated in

their responses. This change was demonstrated by their approach and comprehension of the practice of making and being a friend.

Finding 4: All of the students experienced helping others, which made them feel good about themselves.

Help/helpful/helping/helped was mentioned during the interview 43 times by the students. The questions were asked explicitly in the interview so it is important to illuminate the findings with quotes from the students. When asked to “tell me about a time you felt you helped someone,” every participant was able to remember when they had helped. Seven students described examples that involved helping other students at the school, and one student described helping his mom.

But when asked, “How did it make you feel,” these were the responses:

P3: “It made me feel good, because I helped someone. And taught them how to do something.”

P8: “It felt good [about community service] think it is really good, I think we are doing the right thing.”

P7: “Good about myself.”

P2: “Excited, helpful, um, appreciative, um, happy.”

P5: “I actually did feel good when I helped someone.”

P1: “Good”

P6: “ [Researcher: And then what happened after that?] He stopped, he started to leave her alone. [Researcher: Well, did the little girl tell you anything, did she say anything?] She’s all, thank you so much. Now every day she comes up to me and gives me a big hug.”

P4: “Program... By like, well just helping them with like a project, was a like, I don’t know like, drawings like and stuff. And just like helping them. In this program, if they think it’s hard.”

These responses to the general question led to the understanding that the act of helping made them feel good. Helping others was a large part of this program. And like with all of the skills practiced during the 12 weeks, the students learned through experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984). The community-service project was a way for

the students to use what they had learned and to apply it. The students decided to conduct a penny drive for a local no-kill animal shelter. They designed and created a poster and labels for the bottles for the collection. They had to give a proposal speech to their school principal to gain approval for the project. The students then had to visit every class in the school to talk about the community-service project. Then the students had to count the pennies. And as a final piece, the students delivered the check to the shelter and to meet the animals.

To discover how the students experienced the activity, the researcher requested the following: Please describe the community-service activity. How did you feel about participating in it?

The students replied:

P8: "I think we are doing the right thing. Uh, like we're not doing something bad, like, we're not doing the penny drive and lying about it's going to this person and then actually keeping it for ourselves. We are actually giving it to them."

P1: "I feel thankful because of a lot of people at the school don't get to do it."

P4: "That, I like that we could help. But what I didn't really like about it is, that, well third grade doesn't get enough money."

P2: "Well, I did, I helped other people, like explained to them, like some people, what we need to do and what else. Or what I need to do like they'll help me and I'll help them."

P6: "It was fun, I'm glad because like if people had questions about it they would come like straight to me and ask me the questions."

P5: "I feel really happy about participating in it because, because we're helping animals that are sick. They might even need medical bills that are too expensive for the people for all those animals so they need money to spend so that they can keep the animals alive."

P3: "We went to the classrooms and talked about [the community-service project] and the penny drive. But first we had to get [the principal's] permission. And we decided to go by grade, um, and then we counted the money. And we're going to take a field trip to [the community service location]."

The responses to this particular question were more nuanced. While the general response to the first question revealed that helping made the students feel good, when asked about this specific example of helping, the answers were diverse. One student

remarked, “We are doing the right thing” because “we are actually giving it to them.” One expressed being “thankful” to be a part of the community service project. Two students liked to answer questions or explain to others what they were doing, indicating that they were in the know. One discussed his class not earning enough money. And another gave the specifics of the community service project without discussing how the project made her feel. And only one student discussed the benefit to the animals.

While the students all felt good about their participation, the individual responses spoke to the gains to self. Students obtained a clearer understanding that helping made them feel good because of their participation in community service during the before-school program. But what that good feeling can be attributed to was different for each student.

Finding 5: The students understood that cooperation requires working together and mutual participation. It became difficult to cooperate for the students when there weren't structures in place, such as rules, clear directions, communication, leadership, and everyone participating in a collective effort.

Five of the eight students used the words “work together” when asked to describe the meaning of cooperation. One student did not reply to that question. P6 said, “To cooperate, so somebody is doing something and you didn't really like their idea, it's good to just say I really like your idea because and whatever the reason is.” And P4 asked: “Wait, was it the one where we played games?”

A demonstration of cooperative action was represented with the use of we, not fighting, mutual decision making. This complex theme was represented in the data as a result of the prompt but also was mentioned by the students in other answers. However,

the majority of the students were able to demonstrate an understanding of the concept and action of cooperation. The students were given a more specific example where cooperation and compromise could be demonstrated in their responses. The example: You want to play Monopoly, but your brother wants to play Go Fish. Tell me how you would go about making a decision that is fair for both of you.

Many of the responses involved a time limit for each game and an agreement to play both games. The time limit was explicitly discussed during the program.

P1: I'd play, I would play her game first and then ask her if she'd play my game next.

P3: It means to work with someone and agree on what you're doing and work together on it.

P5: "You work and you do not refuse to do anything unless it's something that you want to do."

P6: I'd probably compromise with her. We can play go fish for 30 minutes a monopoly for another 30 minutes. And that can go on for like as long as you guys want to play.

P7: um, we could play go fish and once we finish that we can play monopoly.

P8: um, We can play for 30 to an hour on one game and then we can go to another.

The students were able to demonstrate an understanding of what cooperation looks like. One respondent used creative problems-solving skills to come up with a solution:

P2: "If I liked Monopoly, which I do. And my brother likes Go Fish, like he does. Um, I would say why don't we just pick another game that we can agree on. Cause both of these are really good games, but we can pick another one that we all like."

But the students also discussed how at times it was hard to cooperate:

P3: "Sometimes it was hard, but if we were doing something with directions, then, um, it was kind of easy because everyone agreed on the rules and everyone understood."

P2: "Working together, um, not fighting, um, helping each other go through hard things. Um, sometimes it would be hard; sometimes it would be pretty easy because when we did that bottle thing and I was, I think I was a leader. It was hard and getting everybody to cooperate and make sure everything made sense, I said. And, um, to make sure everybody did something."

The students also spoke of the complex nature of cooperation. Sometimes it was hard, and sometimes it was easy. Two students commented on the fact that if structures

were in place, such as rules, clear directions, communication, leadership, and everyone participating, then cooperating was easy. But if not, cooperation could be hard.

Cooperation was the most difficult prosocial skill for the students, based on descriptions in their own words, evaluation of the program activities that involved group work and cooperation, and in the researcher's view. The students often had to be reminded that they were to work together on tasks during the program. That experience was reflected in the data. The students found that cooperation required working together and group participation. Students found importance in having structures in place, such as rules, clear directions, communication, leadership, and participation by everyone.

Two students in particular elaborated on that theme P2 said, "It was hard and getting everybody to cooperate and make sure everything made sense, I said. And, um, to make sure everybody did something." P3 said, "Sometimes it was hard, but if we were doing something with directions then, um, it was kind of easy because everyone agreed on the rules and everyone understood." These students embraced the need for structure when it came to working in cooperative groups.

Finding 6: Students reported unique demonstrations of being changed for the better by the before-school program.

The students were asked: What things do you observe about yourself that are different now from when you first started the program that are related to this program?

The answers were unique to the individual student.

P3: "Um, I used to be kind of shy and I didn't like to um do the first challenge. And that, now I'm not that shy anymore. And with the presenting skills, after we did that, I did my book report and I didn't feel nervous at all."

P6: "Um, at first I wouldn't like really help anybody because I thought that I was going to get hurt. So I would just like watch but not since I started this program I start to help people and stick up for them."

P5: "I notice that having friends and playing with them is more fun than playing by yourself. Yeah, usually I didn't have many friends. Usually most....(We were interrupted by other students. Researcher: So I asked you if, because you said that having friends is more fun, which has made it different than playing by yourself.) Yeah! And it uh... Yup and being kind to your friends will get your friends to stop calling you disgusting and hating you. That's what most of my class did to me in Alamogordo. Boy was that annoying."

P1- (quietly) "I can't think of anything."

P2: "I like helping others"

P8: "No, not really. I'm more cooperative."

P4: "uhhh, Well, I know how to make, like, friends easier and uh cooperate more."

P7: "Like, it's like um, (long pause), I learned how to make friends better."

The researcher used a technique to discover participant voice called the "I poem."

The researcher underlined every first-person statement that had important verbs, then compiled them to get a sense of the group. They are "I used to be, I didn't like, I'm not, I did, I didn't feel"; "I wouldn't like, I thought, I was going, I would, I started, I start"; I notice, I didn't have"; "I can't"; "I like"; "I'm more"; "I know how"; and "I learned."

The first two respondents explained their growth trajectory. The first one explained her change as: "I used to be shy, I didn't like the first challenge [greeting an unknown student], I'm not that shy, I did my book report, and I wasn't nervous." The second student's growth looked like "I wouldn't like to help others, I thought I was going to get hurt, I would watch [instead of helping], I started this program, and I start to help people and stick up for them." For one student, change was about noticing the difference between having friends and not having friends. Another changed because she recognized that they she liked to help others. Yet another became more cooperative. And the other two understood that they gained skills such as "know how to make" and "learned how to make" friends. Some of the answers reflected the intentional activities and discussions

that took place during class (helping, cooperation, and friendship) but others were additional gains. Additional gains that the students experienced as a result of participating in this program included a decrease in shyness, as a result of giving speeches in front of the classes, and gaining courage to stand up for people.

Seven of the eight participants were able to discern a difference in themselves as a result of going through the intervention. And these students found what they learned had changed them for the better.

This chapter presented the six findings that emerged from analyzing the students' experiences during the before school program. The findings were organized by the developmental framework of analysis. Student experience of the program was demonstrated throughout the chapter. Each segment of data concluded with a discussion of the central evaluation research question, which tied the findings to the original research question. Finding six addressed the "change" component posed in the research question.

In sum, the students found the before-school program to be a positive experience where they learned to make friends more effectively, they felt good about helping others, but they found it difficult to cooperate consistently. Students evaluated the program as being fun, and they spoke about 38 of the 52 activities. But the bulk of the program evaluation centered on four specific concepts: conflicted feelings, finding support, friendship skills, and the difficulty of mending hurt feelings. And each student came away from the program having gained a meaningful and unique skill.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation was to capture and report the lived experiences of students who participated in a before-school counselor intervention program focused on learning prosocial behaviors and developing peer relational skills. The study makes an important contribution to the literature by providing confirmation to the growing body of research that establishes positive outcomes for children who develop prosocial behaviors and peer relational skills. This chapter ties the theoretical grounding of humanism to the findings.

This chapter explores the meaning of the findings while providing integration with current literature, research, and practice. Understanding what the findings mean and how they relate to the greater body of knowledge is an important next step in the research process. Meaning was contextualized in the lens of humanistic theory. In Chapters 1 and 2, person-centered theory was discussed. The findings were examined using the PCT and the humanistic paradigm. “Meaning can come from looking at differences and similarities, and from inquiring into and interpreting causes, consequences, and relationships” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 172).

The intervention was created and conducted with humanistic ethos, in particular the person-centered theory. This current study reinforces some of the principles set forth in humanism. The orientation of humanism can best be understood by this definition:

Psychological development includes the development of greater capacities for self-understanding, understanding of others, and understanding of relationships;

clarification and development of values and life goals; development of a greater capacity for deep experiencing; the strengthening of relational bonds; the promotion of an environment of mutual care and empathy; development of a greater sense of personal freedom and choice while respecting rights and needs of others as well as the limits imposed by reality; and the strengthening of individual, relational, and group agency (Bohart, et al., 2004, p. 5).

Each finding was evaluated in terms of the research question: How are the lived experiences of the students changed by going through the intervention? The students' interpretation of change added another dimension to the understanding of the students' experience. The interview questions were semistructured to remain in the qualitative tradition (Appendix C). Therefore, the question of change never was asked directly but had to be found in the language the students used to describe themselves and their experience. Induction in the data analysis process led to the findings, which were narrowed down further to discover the outcomes. This scaffolding technique allowed for a greater understanding of the changes that occurred for the students. Student change was represented in this analysis as a gain. The student gains discussed in Chapter 4 were demonstrated by the student responses. Evidence of the means that led to the gains is represented in the student responses, suggested in the research, and/or learned by the researcher while conducting the intervention.

Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the students' self-selected gains from the before-school intervention. The previous chapter presented the findings and elaborated upon each finding through the students' voices. The findings were interpreted in an organizational framework that was a result of coding and analysis. This chapter provides

insights into the findings in a more integrated manner. Synthesis is the “process of pulling everything together: how the research questions are answered by the findings, to what extent the findings emanating from your data collection methods can be interpreted in some way, how your findings relate to the literature, and how the findings relate to the researcher’s prior assumptions about the study” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 179).

The students found it meaningful to understand and work through feelings, had a positive experience, learned how to use intentional acts in friendship, felt good helping others, understood the meaning of cooperation, and had a personal experience of change/improvement. This section contains a discussion of the student change, evidence that led to that finding, and outside research that places the finding in the context of the greater body of knowledge.

Change is an underlying theme throughout each of the findings. The students expressed what they had learned and the personally meaningful outcomes that had were different for them as a result of this before-school program. The findings are explored further in how the program contributed to the findings and finally, how the findings contribute to humanistic theory. As Rogers (1951) discussed in his 19 predispositions of person-centered therapy, the internal reference of the individual is the best way to understand them.

Analytic Categories

In the analysis, the researcher looked for patterns within the categories by discovering the similarities and differences among the participants as a group, among the individual participants, and with the relevant theory and research in the field of counseling and education. The analysis categories, which are consistent with the

humanistic paradigm, are student self-selection of individual and meaningful goals, student experience as the foundation of learning, student growth as evidenced by socially constructive behavior, and how student interpersonal relationships impact the individual student and the overall school culture.

The intent of this chapter is to provide a holistic understanding of the student gains, how they relate to specific constructs in the design of the intervention, and how these gains relate to the body of research and to the humanistic paradigm. The chapter continues with a discussion of the researcher's assumptions and biases that were identified in Chapter 3. The next section contains recommendations for school counselors and recommendations for future research. And finally, Chapter 5 ends with a conclusion.

Analytic Category 1: Student self-selection of individual and meaningful outcomes.

Student self-selection of individual and meaningful outcomes is represented three ways in this study. The first is the discovery of what students found to be meaningful (Finding 1). Second is the finding of the students' belief that the before-school program was a positive experience (Finding 2). The third category was the unique demonstrations of change as determined by the students (Finding 6).

One of the tenets of humanism is upholding the right of each individual to choose and work toward personal goals (Vereen, Hill, Sosa, & Kress, 2014). The humanistic perspective understands that outcomes are highly individualized wherein the individual (in this case, the student) determines the definition of a successful outcome (Bohart, et al., 2004).

As part of the Task Force for the Development of Practice Recommendations for the Provision on Humanistic Psychosocial services, the nature of the person was elucidated upon and included:

Humans are meaning-makers. Meaning is a product of individuals, communities, and persons-in-interaction. What constitutes a meaningful life is chosen by individuals embedded in communities and in relationships. Humans are agents. This means that they are ultimately the sources and originators of their own actions. They are able to initiate action, make choices, set goals, and chart life courses (Bohart, et al., 2004, p. 17).

Understanding the student's cultural frame of reference is a priority in Person Centered Theory (Cornelius-White, 2005). Humanistic theory posits that there are multiple perspectives of the individual's reality (Bohart, et al., 2004). The student is the expert on one's own life, and it is appropriate for the student to develop meaning for what is important to them, what they learned from the before-school program, and which outcomes they value.

Students found four concepts to be most meaningful: conflicted feelings, finding support, friendship skills, and the difficulty of mending hurt feelings. Conflicted feelings were demonstrated by student recall of what it means to have mixed emotions or to feel multiple ways about something. But, only one student verbalized application of the concept to their own life. The concept seemed to be meaningful based on student recall; however, it was unclear if the students were changed by this lesson. The second concept of finding support was demonstrated in the students' interpretation and understanding of

support, who supports them, and the ways they can be supported. This activity helped the students' verbalize a way of categorizing their friends and family members as their support team. Friendship skills also were found to be meaningful. The students' experience of this activity was that it was "memorable", "fun," and "hard," but the most impactful result was that the students could discern the difference between the surface-level understanding of someone versus friendship built on a deeper understanding by learning more about them by engaging in conversation. They learned that by asking questions, they created a better base of knowledge about the other person--as opposed to the assumption that they know someone based on the way they look or the way they dress. And finally, the students found value in discussing the difficulty of mending hurt feelings during the "Alex's Heart" activity. The children expressed the difficulty of putting the heart back together and the deeper understanding that it could not be repaired to resemble its original form. This was a complex task that involved recall of the story, thinking of what they could say or do to help Alex or make him feel better, writing their ideas on their scrap of paper, using teamwork and communication to rebuild the heart, and understanding of the symbolism and purpose of the activity. There was a high level of recall and understanding of the purpose of this activity.

The evidence for finding the program to be meaningful was represented in the unanimous recall of the four concepts, which were conflicted feelings, finding support, friendship skills, and the difficulty of mending hurt feelings. These concepts can be examined under the larger constructs of emotional reactivity and self-regulation. It is important to consider the long-term effects when children learn these skills at a young age. Carlo et al. (2012) demonstrated in a longitudinal study the effects of maturation and

puberty and the relationship with self-regulation and emotional reactivity with prosocial behaviors. Self-regulation, which is the ability to effectively manage one's emotions, attentional processes, and behaviors, has been shown to have a positive relationship to prosocial competencies in adolescents (Carlo, Crockett, Wolff, & Beal, 2012). Emotional reactivity was found to have existed on a continuum where those who had high emotional reactivity experience more emotional reactions to both positive and negative occurrences. An inverse relationship has been found between negative emotional reactivity and prosocial competencies (Carlo, Crockett, Wolff, & Beal, 2012). Providing a medium where students can work on the skills to enhance self-regulation is one of the benefits to this type of program.

Individualized and meaningful outcomes are an important component to understand because they speak to the benefits of the program to meet the needs of different individuals. Learning new skills in an out-of-school environment has been shown to enhance students' personal development (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). Students gained from having a positive experience in a small group. The evidence for finding the program to be a positive experience was represented most clearly by the participants, all of whom used positive descriptors to describe the program. School climate was based on patterns of people's experiences of school life (National School Climate Council, 2007). The National School Climate Council statement on school climate determined that "a sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society" (National School Climate Council, 2007, p. 4). Having a positive experience, especially before the school day begins, can promote an improved school climate, which

can lead to gains for the individual student as well as for the school community. This was a collective experience with the whole group having a positive experience. These positive experiences can contribute to a positive school climate.

The students found the before-school program to be a positive experience that was not dependent upon the researcher. Half of the students wanted the program to continue throughout the year because they were receiving something positive from the program. And some of the students understood the researcher to be a part of the program or the creator of the program. But the majority of the students did not mention the researcher during the interviews. This finding gave merit to the understanding that it was not just this researcher who could conduct such a program and that this particular researcher was not integral to the success of the program. When evaluating the program as a whole, it was important to make this distinction because of the implications for efficacy in other settings with other people implementing the intervention.

And finally, students reported unique demonstrations of being changed for the better by the before-school program. Each participant offered different answers, but most students were able to discern a difference in themselves as a result of going through the intervention. And these students found what they learned had changed them.

Evidence that provided support for a demonstration of change occurred at an individual level with seven of the eight participants discussing a unique skill that they had improved upon. The analysis for this change was discovered on an individual level. The majority of the students reported an individual change unique to them. Prevention was not a single strategy that will work with every population in the same manner (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). Instead, prevention was collection of distinct approaches, with

outcomes varying and depending on the type of intervention, the population, the program objectives, and environment in which the intervention takes place. Therefore, it was crucial to investigate all of the factors that led to the program outcomes (Durlak & Wells, 1997).

The students' self-selection of individual and meaningful outcomes was developed during the implementation of the before-school program. Researchers have found that creation of an intentional program using the SAFE procedure (sequential, active, focused, and explicit) is most effective (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Programs must be well designed and well conducted to be effective (Durlak, et al., 2007). Therefore, it was crucial to be intentional in the construction of the intervention. This intervention was sequenced developmentally. Each week was devised to build upon the next as new skills were integrated. The program began with simple get-to-know-you exercises, and as the weeks progressed, the lessons became more complex. Week 2 was about the consideration of feelings; week 3, sharing; and week 4 began a discussion about being helpful. Friendship was the theme for week 5, and then being liked by other children was week 6. Week 7 discussed standing up for yourself, and week 8 was empathy. Week 9 was about kindness; week 10, cooperation; and week 11, depending on others. Week 12 was a group wrap-up. The skills learned during the first and second weeks were advanced and refined as the program went on. The more complex skills, such as empathy and cooperation, were introduced along the way through talking about feelings and helping each other, but those concepts were discussed explicitly later on, after the students had examples to draw from.

Being explicit during discussions of the concepts they were learning was another recommendation for the prevention programs (Durlak & Wells, 1997). Based on the interviews, some concepts were more explicit than others, which was evidenced by the students' ability to recall them. For example, discussions about building a better airplane and about nuclear waste activity were explicitly about sharing. The students did not label these activities as such. None of the students used the term empathy, despite discussing the concept for a week. Although there were demonstrations of empathy by the students, their developmental level might preclude verbal application of this concept.

Time was another thoughtful consideration when creating a focus for the program. The program was 12 weeks long, 45 minutes a day. The students essentially had five weeks of explicitly learning prosocial behaviors and five weeks of explicitly learning peer relational skills, although these concepts were not mutually exclusive and often were taught in tandem. It was rare to have a counseling group to be 12 weeks in duration for 45 minutes per day. Most group counseling interventions do not have as much time to devote to these constructs. However, this focus specifically on these two constructs over a prolonged time could have led to greater gains for the students.

The final recommendation is for the program to be active. Being a prevention program, it used active exercises throughout, including games, discussions, expressive art activities, cooperative learning, and group relational tasks. Cooperative games were considered an intervention that is appropriate to promote fun and positive social interaction (Carlson, 1999). Games that are more inclusionary and noncompetitive had been found to have multiple effects, such as forming positive peer relationships, increasing friendships, inclusionary skills, and fairness with others. It had been suggested

that counselors can use cooperative games in developmental guidance programs to promote multiple skills in a group setting (Carlson, 1999). Using active games made learning fun for these students. This helped promote the positive experience and good attendance in the program. The students wanted to be there, which made a significant difference.

In conclusion, humanistic interventions in counseling are particularly concerned with how process and outcomes are related, both client and research outcomes (Scholl, Ray, & Brady-Amoon, 2014). It was important in the research design and implementation of this intervention to adopt these humanistic values because they became evident in the student outcomes. The humanistic interventionist seeks to integrate the principles of humanism into all aspects of practice (Scholl, Ray, & Brady-Amoon, 2014).

As Scholl, Ray, and Brady-Amoon (2014) suggested, it was important to honor the individual's subjective experiences. Therefore, the humanistic principle of irreducibility needs to be re-evaluated. The researchers insisted that humanistic counselors have a primary responsibility to respect the individual's personally meaningful goals. This created a situation where the individual's goals supplant those of irreducibility (Scholl, Ray, & Brady-Amoon, 2014). This statement confirms that elucidating and understanding the student experience and their selection of meaningful outcomes fall under the humanistic paradigm.

Analytic Category 2: Student experience as the foundation of learning.

Student experience as the foundation of learning was reported by the student's interest in activities that were fun, novel, and repeated and in activities that were developmentally appropriate (Subfinding 1). Dewey wrote, ". . . the very ideas of

education as a freeing of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed toward social aims. Otherwise a democratic criterion of education can only be inconsistently applied” (Dewey, 2007, p. 76). Meaning is created by learning through experience.

The students in this study reported that learning occurred in the context of experience. The students felt most strongly about activities that employed fun, novelty, and repetition. This subfinding was represented repeatedly in the statements of the students. They discussed, during the interview, the activities that had meaning for them. As discussed in Chapter 4, responses were measured before and after the students saw the journals. It can be ascertained that the activities which were not in the journal caused a decrease in the recall of such events. For the activities that had no record of student recall, it can be deduced that they did not have an impact on the students. This researcher posits that because there was no tangible cue to trigger memory, there is potential for a more meaningful connection to the activities that were not represented in the journal. The following activities were remembered without the journal prompts:

The challenges required the students to apply what they have learned and practiced in the group environment. The students were asked to complete four challenges, and we discussed them as a group. That real-world experience may have been memorable for the students. The community-service speeches to the classrooms were memorable and gave some students an opportunity to develop their communication skills. The penny drive occurred throughout the program; we discussed it regularly, and in week 12, the students counted the pennies so it wasn't surprising that they would remember this without prompting. The nuclear-waste activity might have been recalled because it was the students' first introduction to the program and was presented it during the

recruitment and parent presentation. The airplane-building discussion, Shark Bridge, Halloween games, and respect Simon says/follow the leader were physical, cooperative group games, which may have contributed to greater recall. However, these types of games also were on the no-recall list.

The difference may be in the students' perception of what was fun or not. It is possible that they did not recall the other similar activities because they did not perceive them as fun. Intentionally incorporating fun into the counseling intervention initiative has been shown to build resilience for those who have experienced trauma (Hutchinson & Lema, 2009). Researchers have found that,

Instructional practices should build on and enhance students' intrinsic interest in easier to manage a classroom without resorting to manipulation of children's behavior through externally imposed rewards and punishments. Some forms of instruction (ex. Cooperative learning) provide many more opportunities to learn and refine social skills and to build positive relationships with other students than do currently dominant forms of instruction (teacher lecture and seat work) (Lewis, Battistich, & Schaps, 1990, p. 53).

Experiential learning allows for the students to experience themselves and the world and can lead to greater empathy, relationships, and the ability to problem solve (Bohart, et al., 2004). One of the fundamentals of person-centered learning is that the evaluation and significance of student learning is determined by the learner (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). The use of the student voice is vital to establish what the students have learned by going through the before-school intervention. Experiential learning, including service learning programs, benefits students by enhancing self-efficacy and self-esteem, has a

more positive attitude toward school and community involvement, and leads to gains in social skills relating to leadership and advocacy (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011).

Constructing activities that were developmentally appropriate for a range of ages and maturity levels contributed to student learning (Subfinding 2). This included an understanding of the strengths that a multiage group provides and enhancing opportunities for learning about differences. The second subfinding was that the biggest challenge for the student participants of different ages and maturity levels was learning how to work together on tasks that required high levels of communication, cooperation, and problem solving. The original intent of having three grade levels in the program was to increase the diversity of participants, which could offer opportunity for the students to gain an understanding and appreciation for children of other ages who possess different needs and strengths. The students did learn to work with one another despite their age and maturity differences. However, those differences did contribute to the majority of the negative evaluations. Learning how to work together, especially for those who had different levels of maturity, was the biggest challenge the group faced. The researcher noted a gradual change in group behavior. This change was preempted by student discussion and practice of working together. The researcher often used what was happening in the moment to have discussions about how the negative behavior of one member impacted the rest of the group. As these discussions became normed within the group, the students learned to self-regulate. “Early interventions that seek to promote successful adjustment and adaptation to the academic and social environment of the school prior to the emergence of significant academic and social problems hold the

greatest promise of being generally effective strategies for primary prevention” (Lewis, Battistich, & Schaps, 1990, p. 52)

Kolb’s experiential learning theory is appropriate for use in schools (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning also can be appropriate for a variety of contexts. School counseling intervention is another application. “Experiential learning can primarily be understood as learning in which the learning dimensions of context, incentive, and interaction are involved in a subjectively balanced and substantial way” (Illeris, 2007, p. 94).

Humanists believe that facilitative therapeutic processes are most beneficial (Bohart, et al., 2004). This includes the belief that learning and change is fostered through experiencing something not only through cognitive learning. New ways of being are discovered through the creative process of learning by experiencing (Bohart, et al., 2004).

Analytic Category 3: Student growth as evidenced by socially constructive behavior.

Student growth as evidenced by socially constructive behavior was discovered through student experience in helping others (Finding 4), cooperation (Finding 5), and the opportunity to perform community service. All of the students experienced helping others, which made them feel good about themselves. While all of the students felt good about their participation, the individual responses speak to the gains to self. Students obtained a clearer understanding that helping made them feel good because of this introduction to community service during the before-school program. But to what that good feeling can be attributed was different for each student.

The students reported the experience of change when they expressed the good feelings that helping provided during their interviews. These feelings were directly talked about to the researcher with detailed explanation of how and why it felt good. In 2011 researchers conducted a meta-analysis, they found that students who participated in service learning demonstrated gains in attitude toward self, attitudes toward school and learning, civic engagement, social skills, and academic performance (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011). The researcher in this current study found evidence of students experiencing positive attitudes toward self (feeling good about self) and toward their use of social skills. Providing an opportunity to do community service, including allowing for discussion, student leadership, and practice within the group, was found to be a valuable contribution to the development of socially constructive behavior. The community-service project allowed students to practice both their prosocial behavior and their peer relational skills. Meinhard and Brown (2010) found that when structuring community-service learning, the experience should be positive, give responsibility to students, and provide them opportunities to solve problems, make decisions, and build leadership skills. Community service also plays a role in school climate. In a collaborative environment, student communication is encouraged through the practice of these activities. Thus, there is evidence that self-concept and tolerance for differences are increased (Morgan & Streb, 2001).

The students understood that cooperation required working together and mutual participation. It became difficult to cooperate for the students when there weren't structures in place, such as rules, clear directions, communication, leadership, and everyone participating in a collective effort. Cooperation was the most difficult prosocial

skill for the students, based on descriptions in their own words, evaluation of the program activities that involved group work and cooperation, and in the researcher's view. The students often had to be reminded that they were to work together on tasks. The evidence of student growth was reflected in the data, as elaborated in Chapter 4. The students found that cooperation required working together and mutual participation. Students found importance in having structures in place such as rules, clear directions, communication, leadership, and everyone participating. One of the dimensions of school climate, based on research, was that the National School Climate Council (2007) specifically defined a positive and sustained school climate that would include norms, values, and expectations. Schools without these norms have been found to have a higher rate of violence, peer victimization, punitive discipline, absenteeism, and lower academic achievement (Astor, Benbenisty, & Estrada, 2009).

The evidence of change in understanding cooperation was represented by the students defining the term and describing it with an example. The understanding of cooperation combined with the experience of cooperation was found to have long-term benefits. It was found that "cooperative experiences promote the development of the personality trait of cooperativeness" (Choi, Johnson, & Johnson, 2011, p. 998). Also, these cooperative experiences led to a significant decrease in individualistic predispositions where personal interests took precedence over the interests of the social group (Choi, Johnson, & Johnson, 2011).

As noted in the findings, cooperation was a difficult skill for the students to master, and in fact, they discussed having the most difficulty with it. "Problematic behavior can be an expression, albeit a counterproductive one, of individuals' desires to

grow and become more functional” (Bohart, et al., 2004, p. 18). The biggest challenge for the students was to work together with students who represented different ages and maturity levels, as noted. This affects not only learning via experience but also through growth, as evidenced by socially constructive behavior. This interpretation, which was discussed by only two participants, was the explanation of why cooperation can be difficult. It was suggested by the two students that more structure with rules, directions, communication, leadership, and everyone participating might alleviate the cooperation difficulties. This finding was confirmed by the researcher, in most cases with the younger children.

However, one individual in the group exhibited similar behaviors to someone with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Within the group, that student caused the majority of the negative attention, with his negative verbalizations (yelled at a student, “Can I help you!”) and with off-task motor behavior (rolling around on the floor during a discussion). Although such behavior could be detrimental to the overall group performance in cooperative tasks, it was found that 88% of groups with a student who had ADHD were more successful (Zentall, Craig, & Kuester, 2011). The researchers posited that students with ADHD are more able to contribute when the tasks were interesting and not too difficult (Zentall, Craig, & Kuester, 2011). This finding echoed what was observed with the before-school group. This student often caused disruption in the class, but he also contributed many insights during out discussions and activities. If he was not interested, he would say loudly, “This is boring.” But he also was the student who commented during the interview, “I’d like to cover that; this has been the best time and the best program ever.” This is an important finding that speaks to the nature of

group work in schools. There were students in the before-school program with different needs and abilities, but those behavioral challenges might not deter from the overall growth of the individual or from the group as a whole.

Modern humanism conceptualizes growth of the individual to be multifaceted, in the words of Hansen, Speciale, and Lemberger (2014):

In other words, multiple selves, which adaptively manage the role demands of contemporary life, are arguably a better contemporary ideal of mental health than an inflexible, singular, congruent self that is forced to confront the inevitable vagaries of modern living (Hansen, Speciale, & Lemberger, 2014, p. 180).

Person-centered theory posits that behaviors are expected to be intrinsically motivating and internally regulated in order to integrate into an individual's identity (Scholl, Ray, & Brady-Amoon, 2014). Socially constructive behavior can lead to feelings of belongingness (Maslow, 1968). Based on this acquisition, the self-actualization process then can become "more determined from within rather than from without" (Maslow, 1968, p. 34). Humanism allowed for the conceptualization of individuals who are capable of growth and actualization (Hansen, 2006).

Analytic Category 4: Student interpersonal relationships impact the individual student and the overall school climate.

Student interpersonal relationships that impact the individual student and the overall climate were examined through the intentional actions of making and being a friend and through the application of prosocial behavior and peer relational skills (Finding 3). The humanistic theory definition of relationships includes direct psychological contact where dialogue and communication help the individuals develop as

individuals and in relation to others (Bohart, et al., 2004). Students learned to use intentional actions when making and being a friend. Friendship and the process of making a friend through action was a topic that was discussed many times during the 12 weeks. And while friendship is not an unfamiliar topic for students, understanding the intentional actions necessary to make a friend or notice someone who does not have friends was something new. The students went from a general understanding of “friends” to a more specific understanding of what a good friend looks like, how to make friends, how people support the student, and how to stand up for themselves.

The evidence of learning to use intentional actions to make and be a friend was demonstrated during the application of friendship skills during the example and in other related experiences with group members, all of which was discussed during the interview. Researchers found that the most therapeutic factor in a group process for 10-year-old children was the relationship/climate, also known as group cohesiveness (Shechtman & Gluk, 2005). Elements included in that assessment were encouragement and support, acceptance, liking, and attraction to the group. These therapeutic factors have been well researched and are the basis for explaining how people are helped in group counseling (Shechtman & Gluk, 2005). These intentional actions were used in practice with the other members of the group prior to the students exercising those actions in the real world. Group cohesiveness was enhanced through the use of friendship activities.

Peer groups have been shown to provide opportunities for students to socialize, which allows for the adoption of similar goals and attitudes (Baker, Dilly, Aupperlee, & Patil, 2003). These positive relationships contribute to their positive adjustment to school and school satisfaction (Baker, Dilly, Aupperlee, & Patil, 2003). Overall, school

satisfaction is related to meaningful connections to others in the school environment, including peer relationships.

The students also are impacted by the school culture. Professional counseling recognizes systemic dynamics as playing a critical role for students (Vereen, Hill, Sosa, & Kress, 2014). It is believed that individuals are best understood both internally and externally via contexts and systems (Vereen, Hill, Sosa, & Kress, 2014).

Schools are a system in which students are enmeshed. Each school has a different school climate. School climate has been defined by the National School Climate Council (2007) as:

School climate is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

A review of school climate research focused on five dimensions of school climate: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, institutional environment, and the school improvement process (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013). These dimensions are reflected in various areas of analysis of this study. The focus in this section, however, is on the relationship component of school climate.

The before-school intervention was focused on two constructs: prosocial behavior and peer relational skills. The gains discussed in the first section were demonstrated specifically in the findings in the areas of feelings, helping, and cooperation that fall under prosocial behaviors. The students gained the peer relational skills of finding support, friendship skills, and making and being a friend.

Dewey (2007) was a proponent of cooperation within the school environment. But by emphasizing cooperation, Dewey did not denigrate individualism or collectivism but instead denigrated co-dependence (Peng, 2009). Human society can become more functional when individuals practice maximum inclusiveness, in which individualized functions in turn are achieved (Peng, 2009). These differing opinions may be more easily worked through when the relationship is cooperative. This process could include a student letting go of personal needs or feelings to serve the needs of another student.

In fact, Dewey (2007) wrote that the school itself must be a community life where social perceptions and interests are developed. A school is an environment for learning life lessons where communication and cooperation extend the perception of connections (Dewey, 2007). “To succeed in transforming schools into democratic learning communities, society must acknowledge that the space of schools is relational, constructed in relationships, and interactions of educators, students, and other cultural workers” (Jenlink & Jenlink, 2008, p. 317).

Positive social climate acts as an important resource for students’ well-being at school (Baker, Dilly, Aupperlee, & Patil, 2003). Nassar-McMillan, Karvonen, Perez, and Abrams (2009) made the case for schools to be within a relational context where “individual identities and the relationships between them interface in a delicate balance, wherein even subtle changes in attitude and behavior can affect the entire system” (p. 197).

Lemberger and Hutchison (2014) explicated how social context can be improved by a focus on the student within environment. The student can be given strategies to maximize one’s personal agency within the social context. Those who provide services to

students would account for the power structures of the school system (Lemberger & Hutchison, 2014). “By virtue of the development in both the student and school agencies, it is assumed that the school culture will shift from environment-to-student to student-within-environment” (Lemberger & Hutchison, 2014, p. 37).

These four analytic categories were based on student experience: student self-selection of individual and meaningful goals, student experience as the foundation of learning, student growth as evidenced by socially constructive behavior, and student interpersonal relationships impacting the individual student and the overall school culture of the before-school intervention. Then the four categories were placed in the context of the larger body of research. Then they were compared to the humanistic paradigm tenets. All four categories of analysis found a place in the larger research context. This study adds to our understanding of these research concepts, and the findings can be added to other research about school interventions.

Revisiting Assumptions

It is vital to establish credibility with the research findings. Part of the process of eliminating trustworthiness issues is to address the assumptions and biases as detailed in Chapter 3 (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). These assumptions were based on the researcher’s positionality, background, and experience. These six assumptions are discussed in relation to the study’s findings.

The first assumption was that the researcher had a personal understanding and belief that the environment of a school can impact the people within the school. This assumption was not found to be valid, based on the findings of this study. The students did not relay any information about the environment of the school and the personal

impact of the environment. The findings focused primarily on the student's understandings of the program and their personal gains. The researcher did not include assessments that measured the impact of the school environment, which means the impact cannot be confirmed by this study.

The second assumption was that improving the experience of the people within that school would have a positive impact on the overall environment. Some evidence suggests that the students impacted individuals, which in turn might have impacted the environment. An example was the student who reported initially that she was scared to help people but then helped a younger girl who was being bullied; later, the little girl thanked her and now hugs the older girl when she sees her. This could be considered an example of a positive impact. However, this research does not prove that those impacts also were part of creating a more-positive environment.

The third assumption was that prosocial behaviors and peer relational skills can be taught. This assumption held true. The students demonstrated that they learned prosocial behaviors as well as peer relational skills. The students could define, give an example, and relay a consequence of this behavior for many skills. All of the students demonstrated learning of the skills of helping, making/being friends, and cooperation.

The fourth assumption was learning prosocial behaviors and peer relational skills and then practicing them in a group, which contributed to the skills being implemented in the real world. Each student was able to elaborate on an example of how they exhibited prosocial behaviors and peer relational skills in the real world. They discussed examples with their mothers, their siblings, students in their classes, students on the playground, and teachers.

The fifth assumption was that school counselors can and should implement creative ways to improve both the individual student's experience and the overall school climate. Depending on how the researcher's role was understood would determine if this assumption was true. A school counselor did implement a creative way to improve individual student experience. However, it was not the school counselor who was assigned to this school; it was an outside researcher. And again, the overall school climate was not assessed, which means it cannot be determined based on the results of this study.

The sixth assumption was that the researcher believed that children had the potential for growth, regardless of background. This assumption was proven by this study. Almost every student reported specific gains after participating in the before-school intervention. And these students represented the gamut of student racial, economic, gender, maturity, and academic ability. Because all of the participants reported some growth, regardless of background, this assumption was proven to be true.

Potential Misconceptions

It is important to disabuse stakeholders of misconceptions about the prevention program. The intent of the program was not to have another pre-packaged, lockstep, counseling curriculum that is one size fits all. As discussed in the literature review, prosocial behaviors and peer relational skills and their many iterations are well-tilled constructs in the counseling and psychology fields. We know that it is important for students to learn social/emotional skills. School counselors must use their leadership and advocacy skills to creatively implement new ways to help their student populations. This program was just one of the ways to do this.

Each school has different needs and different strengths. It is up to the school counselors to tap their curiosity about what can help, to ask questions, to evaluate resources, and to engage their populations. This qualitative evaluation of the before-school program was an example of how one goes about it. Evaluation allowed for discovery of what was most useful and meaningful. Qualitative methodology allowed for student voice. The combination of these two methods of investigation allowed for a richer understanding of the before-school prevention program. But this conversation was just the beginning.

One piece of the intervention may be perceived as atypical of humanism. Humanistic counseling traditionally is not goal driven for a particular skill set (Bohart, et al., 2004). In fact, there are instances when no goals are set. However, this intervention did include in its delivery a priori themes of prosocial behavior and peer relational skills. This level of focus was in contrast to the more process- and discovery-oriented humanistic-based theory (Bohart, et al., 2004). Goals were not determined in collaboration with the students. Instead, the environment of this school was considered, and the constructs were chosen based on the predetermined needs of this age group at this school. In keeping with the humanistic tradition, the intervention did not contain a specific “treatment package for specific disorders” (Bohart, et al., 2004, p. 18). But rather, it was a more general comprehension of how the students can understand and work through their problems that occur during this developmental stage. This intervention used specific exercises and activities to prompt discussions and provide a space to work on their needs.

Recommendations

The researcher offers recommendations based on the findings, analysis, and conclusions of this study. These include recommendations for school counselors and recommendations for the future.

Recommendations to school counselors

School counselors are the appropriate facilitators for intervention programs. It is incumbent upon them to be intentional in selecting theoretically sound methods of working with groups of students and in selecting research methodology. Schools have limited resources to address social/emotional and cognitive development (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Due to time constraints, schools counselors must decide how to prioritize and implement the type of social/emotional development intervention to use (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

It is imperative for school counselors who are considering the adoption of an intervention program to use their skills as an advocate, leader, and researcher. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has recognized the importance of collaborative relationships between parents, students, school counselors, administrators, teachers, student services personnel, and support staff (2012). “Thus, school counselors are those who most often can and do affect the school environment through multiple contacts with all members of the school setting“(Nassar-McMillan, Karvonen, Perez, & Abrams, 2009, p. 198).

According to the authors of the ASCA National Model (2012), a school counselor’s advocacy efforts should be aimed at eliminating barriers that impede student

development; creating opportunities for all students to learn; ensuring access to a quality school curriculum; collaborating with others within and outside the school to help students meet their needs; and promoting positive systemic change in the schools. Therefore, advocacy involves leadership, collaboration, and systemic change (Trusty & Brown, 2005). Social justice advocacy is designed to help increase access and improve educational outcomes for all students (Ratts & Chen-Hayes, 2007). By intervening in the social context, the school counselor can amplify outcomes over those that focus solely on an individual student. Advocacy involves meeting unidentified needs and taking actions to change the circumstances that contribute to the problem (Trusty & Brown, 2005).

A common theme of professional school-counselor advocacy was to identify unmet needs and take action to change those circumstances (Trusty & Brown, 2005). School counselors are challenged to eliminate barriers impeding students' development, creating opportunities to learn for all students, ensuring access to a quality school curriculum, collaborating with others within and outside the school to help students meet their needs, and promoting positive, systemic change in schools (ASCA, 2012). Trusty and Brown (2005) encouraged school counselors to take the advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills, and then apply them in real-world research contexts. They specifically cited qualitative and quantitative program evaluation data as useful for adding to the knowledge base of advocacy work for school counselors (Trusty & Brown, 2005). This study proposed to do just that with an advocacy and leadership mindset applied when the intervention was created.

Velsor (2009) urged school counselors to use their advocacy skills to develop effective social-emotional learning programs. It was suggested that school counselors

address the common concerns with stakeholders. Stakeholders must understand the connection between social-emotional learning and academics. School counselors who advocate for SEL programming should establish the relationship between social-emotional learning and school success (Velsor, 2009). In the case of this before-school program, a school counselor can promote the results of the study that impress upon the relationship between social-emotional learning and academics. Stakeholders can learn about the importance of school climate to the academic and social lives of children. School counselors can advocate for their students by elaborating on the benefits (work through feelings, positive experience, friendship, cooperation, helping others) of this before-school program.

Leadership is another focus of school counseling. Collaboration with all of the stakeholders within the school was found to be the direction that professional school counselors must take in order to have a voice in educational reform (Bemak, 2000). It is important for school counselors to understand various leadership contexts in order to provide maximum efficacy in their leadership efforts (Dollarhide, 2003). Dollarhide (2003) recommended that courage, commitment, creativity, and faith also were crucial components that help transform school counseling programs. School counselors must be prepared to embrace the leadership role if they are to participate in the collaborative effort of educational reform (Curry & DeVoss, 2009).

Another charge for school counselors is the integration of research and practice with the goal of accountability to the schools and communities they serve (Hays, Wood, & Smith, 2011). Research can guide empirically based practice, and school counselors are prompted to use proven interventions with students. Best practices are considered

those that are guided and that contribute to clinical research (Hays, Wood, & Smith, 2011). The ASCA (2014) has defined professional school counselors as certified or licensed professionals with a master's or doctoral degree in school counseling or the substantial equivalent; such persons are uniquely qualified to address the developmental needs of all students. Professional school counselors deliver a comprehensive school counseling program that encourages students academically, in possible career choices, and in personal and social development. Counselors also can help students maximize their achievement. School counselors deliver direct services in three ways: the school counseling core curriculum (structured lessons designed to help students attain desired competencies); individual student planning (goals and plans); and responsive services (immediate needs and concerns conducted through individual, group, or crisis counseling) (American School Counselor Association, 2014). School counselors are the most appropriate facilitator for this intervention because of their level of understanding of children and their developmental needs.

School counselors can implement leadership strategies in their work in the schools. Steen, Henfield, and Booker (2014) found that the ACE (Achieving Success Everyday) counseling model required explicit leadership strategies to accomplish its goals. The strategies were assessment, review, acquaintance, challenge, empowerment, and support. The researchers elaborated upon each phase with specific approaches to guide the school counselor's leadership efforts (Steen, Henfield, & Booker, 2014). And while the data from the before-school program was directed at the student experience, it is important to develop an appreciation of the leadership efforts required of a school counselor. These efforts are particularly vital when establishing a new program.

Documenting the implementation of social-emotional and academic innovations falls under the professional responsibilities of the school counselor. Elias (1994) elucidated the need for school-based professionals implement innovative prevention programs. This includes an intensive and extensive recording of the practice. The recording should detail how the programs have operated under real-world environments of the school (Elias, 1994). This type of documented and empirically based practice will help professional school counselors determine how to better meet the needs of the students in their schools.

School counselors must be cognizant of intervention approaches that add value to their school environment. Dahir (2004) conducted a study to examine the development, purpose, and components that should be contained in the national standards. Overwhelmingly, personal and social development program activities had the strongest level of support from school counselors. Specifically, elementary school counselors gave the highest ratings to personal/social growth activities. That information can be used by school counselors to promote social/emotional programming. School stakeholders should be provided with evidence of need and efficacy of any prevention program. Because this before-school program used established qualitative research methodology, the student gains are meaningfully represented through student voice and researcher analysis. This data can be used to demonstrate efficacy to stakeholders.

In 1997, researchers conducted a meta-analysis based on primary prevention programs. The researchers found that person-centered programs were one of the two major conceptualizations (Durlak & Wells, 1997). Person-centered programs worked directly with children and used techniques found in counseling literature to promote

change. This included the emphasis on prevention of specific problems and/or general health and well-being (Durlak & Wells, 1997). Counseling literature speaks to the benefits of person-centered facilitative learning. It may be difficult to exhibit on a day-to-day basis, and therefore it is important that school counselors develop an intentional mind-set of being congruent and use their leadership skills to develop a supportive environment.

Person-centered facilitative learning was discovered to be the most appropriate way to work with elementary school children. The facilitator made the intentional decision to demonstrate to the students' unconditional positive regard, congruence, and empathy. Sometimes, this was a challenge.

O'Hara (1995) found that children showed better outcomes when the counselor was not authoritarian but demonstrated warmth, authenticity, congruence, excellent listening skills, unconditional acceptance, and believed that the child was competent. A directional tendency toward wholeness guided students toward constructive results if provided the environmental conditions (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). The fundamentals of person-centered learning were adopted for use in the before-school intervention. They included preconditions where the leader was secure enough within herself and with her relationships to others that she trusted the students to think for themselves and learn for themselves. The facilitator provided learning resources in the form of lessons, materials, and experiential activities that opened doors to new experiences. The facilitative learning climate provided an atmosphere in which realness, caring, and listening occurred regularly. And finally, the evaluation of the extent and significance of student learning

was made by the learners themselves and reported to the facilitator/researcher (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).

It is important for school counselors to recognize the many hats they wear and to use their time efficiently. Survival of the school counseling profession might even depend upon school counselors' ability to establish proof about the value of their service to schools and students (Dahir, 2004). This includes research, data collection, and an examination of program efficacy. National school counseling standards assist in that process by providing a guide toward assessing the skills that students acquire as a result of school counselors (Dahir, 2004).

School counselors must take leadership roles not only in designing and implementing programming but empirically researching them. And if found to be efficacious, school counselors must promote their work and let the public and education leaders know that school counseling does make a difference in the lives of children.

Recommendations for Further Research

As mentioned, research and accountability are hallmarks for best practices for the counseling profession (Hays, Wood, & Smith, 2011). Counselors are encouraged to reflect upon the research in order to integrate best practices into their interventions (Hays, Wood, & Smith, 2011). Culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate constructs were used in the creation of this before-school intervention program. A study was conducted that investigated the implementation failures of school reform of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (Elias, Zins, Graczyk, & Weissberg, 2003). A need for better documentation of the descriptions of educational innovation was discovered. To provide context, it is important to document

implementation of social-emotional and academic innovations. Capturing and explicating the contextual details of an innovation were recommended to provide other practitioners a road map to replicate success or avoid pitfalls of the innovation (Elias, Zins, Graczyk, & Weissberg, 2003). These recommendations are described as:

Transferring effective programs into real world settings and maintaining them there is a complicated, long-term process that requires dealing effectively with the successive, complex phases of program diffusion. These phases include how well information about a program's existence and value is supplied to communities (dissemination), whether a local organization or group decides to try the new program (adoption), how well the program is conducted during a trial period (implementation), and whether the program is maintained over time (sustainability). (Durlak & DuPre, 2008, p. 327).

Primary-prevention intervention has resulted in positive outcomes for children (Durlak & Wells, 1997). Intervention research recommendations are to increase the precision of theory, design, and program evaluation. This will provide better data for the next generation of primary-prevention mental-health programs for children and adolescents (Durlak & Wells, 1997).

In the future, programs like this one should be researched qualitatively and quantitatively to establish a more significant cause-and-effect relationship. It also would be helpful to assess the overall school climate before and after the intervention to establish its impact on the environment of the school. The program could be expanded to include more school counselors or trained facilitators per school. The group size also could be increased to determine if that is a factor in decreasing the positive gains of the

intervention. Additional research might determine if the group can be larger and continue to provide opportunities for students to learn prosocial and peer relational skills.

Presently, we have gained the understanding that this type of program can be successful before school. This knowledge can open doors for many exciting possibilities for school counselors who want to help their students reach their own best potential.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine student experience and understand the student's evaluation of change. The 12-week preventative program, which had the participation of eight students in Grades 3-5 and focused on prosocial behavior and peer relational issues, resulted in six findings. Those results were further analyzed through the lens of humanism to discover four categories. Those categories substantiate the efficacy of humanistic interventions in schools.

This chapter was the elaboration and analysis of the findings. The six findings were examined for patterns that revealed the essence and meaning of the information. Synthesis of this information revealed four analytic categories. Specifically, what was learned by the analysis was that students were changed by the before-school intervention program. Recommendations were made for school counselors to be the appropriate facilitators for intervention programs. It was incumbent upon them to be intentional in selecting theoretically sound methods of working with groups of students and research methodology. And finally, interventions that used prosocial skills and peer relational behaviors were appropriate constructs for program design in the before-school program.

To arrive at these interpretations, extensive analyses were done to assess group experiences, individual student experiences, and the place of previous research.

An analysis based on the experiences of eight participants requires an understanding of the limits of generalizability. All eight participants were children between the ages of 8 and 11, which can mean that their interpretations might not translate in the same way that adult interpretations might. Interviews are considered nonexperimental research methods, which are useful in describing parameters such as implementation and consequences of the program. This information was beneficial in describing these characteristics to stakeholders (Hsieh, et al., 2005). However, interviewing children can be difficult because they might have trouble with expounding on the purpose of some of the activities in the before-school program. For these reasons, it was imperative to discuss the interpretations and implications that were drawn directly from the student's articulations about their experiences.

Because the researcher was involved at all levels of design, implementation, and evaluation, it was critical to involve other coders to increase inter-rater reliability. It was important to elaborate upon assumptions and discuss whether they were proven true. Ongoing, critical reflection occurred with university advisers. An audit trail elaborated on every coding decision and thought process along the way. And a researcher's journal was used as another avenue to confirm or disconfirm patterns as they emerged. It was this researcher's goal to provide a balance of a personal meaning-making of the data while ensuring credibility and trustworthiness of the results.

The study makes an important contribution to the literature. The elaboration on the findings in the study and the theoretical grounding of humanism provide more

confirmation to the growing body of research that establishes positive outcomes for children who develop prosocial behaviors and peer relational skills. Consistent with humanistic theory, it was determined that “relational factors highlighted by humanism are the key ingredients in human change processes” (Hansen, Speciale, & Lemberger, 2014, p. 176).

In 2011, Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, and Eder addressed the outcome research for school counseling interventions and found them to have positive effects on students. But along with that was the call for more empirically supported evidence that attends to what works, with which students, and under what circumstances. This dissertation was a means to that end.

Appendix A

INTERVENTION SCHEDULE

Intervention

Timeline	Construct	Measured by	Intervention	Activity
Week 1 <i>5 days</i>	Introductions to Group			Journal Past/Present/Future People Bingo We Have Something in Common Worksheet Team member Interview
Week 2	Prosocial	Considerate of others feelings	Learning to listen and communicate in a group setting	Treasure hunt
<i>5 days</i>			Identifying feelings	Drawing faces
			Expressing your feelings	Mixed emotions worksheet
			Describing and talking about your feelings	Pair/share- describing activities, places, people that make me feel worksheet
		Community service project	How to brainstorm	Brainstorming ideas for project
Week 3	Prosocial	Shares readily	Sharing	Build an airplane with limited supplies (trade or share)
			Cooperating	Cooperative movement- Nuclear waste activity
<i>3 days</i>			Compromising	Individual scenarios- Steps to compromise
Week 4	Prosocial	Volunteers to help (Helpful)	Friendly, Nice, Helper Words	Words worksheet
			Respecting others	Follow the leader
<i>5 days</i>			Depending on others	Scenarios worksheet
			Offering to help others	Shoe search (one no hands and one no eyes)
		Community service project	How to delegate responsibility	Committee members- responsibilities assigned
Week 5	Peer relational problems	Has 1 good friend (Friendship)	True friends	Who is on my team?
			Understanding cliques	Group discussion/role play
<i>5 days</i>			Being part of a group	Building a tower
			Joining a new group	Brainstorm/worksheet
		Community service project	How to write up an action plan	Deciding what to do to plan for the community service project
Week 6	Peer relational problems	Liked by other children	Meeting new people and getting to know them	Starting a conversation activity
<i>5 days</i>			Interpreting body language	Body language card game- ID emotions
			Being a good sport	Hot potato- no pouts
			Giving and accepting compliments	Pair/share
		Community Service Project	Committing to the action plan	What steps have been taken so far? Does the plan need to be altered? What next?
Week 7	Peer relational problems	Picked on or bullied	Stick up for yourself	Sticky situations

5 days			Being bullied	Rewind and do over
			Dealing with teasing	Mean or not? worksheet
			Group pressure and learning to say no	Brainstorm and practice
		Community Service Project		Follow up
Week 8	Prosocial	Helpful of other hurt (Empathy)	Showing interest in others	Interview- asking the right questions
			Empathy	Empathy problem solving worksheet
5 days			Prosocial Behavior	Pay it forward- How community service project impacts them
			Understanding the impact of your behavior on others and other's behavior	Pair/share why behaved this way
		Community Service Project		Follow up
Week 9	Prosocial	Kind to younger children	Kindness	Kindness cards
4 days			Kinder and friendlier	Worksheet
			Caring about others	Letter to younger person
			Giving advice	Pair/share
Week 10	Peer relational problems	Plays alone (cooperation)	Accepting differences	Worksheet with partner
5 days			Problem solving	Finding alternative solutions to social problems
			Identifying problem-causing behavior	Problems with self and others worksheet
			Refocusing attitude	Reframing- turning positive into negative
		Community Service Project		Final details for implementation
Week 11	Peer relational problems	Gets along better with adults than children	Finding alternative solutions	Story starters
5 days			Learning from mistakes	What I would do differently game
			Thinking before acting and making wise choices	Don't get mad game
			Group problem solving	Ready, set, respond game
		Community Service Project		Final steps
Week 12	Group Concludes			Community service project Card and gift exchange Journal
5 days				

Appendix B
SOURCES OF DATA

1. Attendance
2. Grade
3. Gender
4. Favorite Subject
5. Years at School
6. Opinion on length of program- too long, too short, or just right
7. Interview (Thematic analysis)
 - a. 12 questions
 - b. 2 coders
 - c. Cut and sort and key words
8. A priori themes (Theory related meta coding)
 - a. Considerate of people's feelings
 - b. Shares readily
 - c. Volunteers to help
 - d. Helpful if other hurt (empathy)
 - e. Kind to younger children
 - f. Friendship
 - g. Liked by other children
 - h. Standing up for self
 - i. Depending on others
 - j. Cooperation
9. Community service project
10. Field notes (coding for repetitions, constant comparison, key words, thematic analysis, missing data)
 - a. Activities
 - b. Perception of how each activity went
 - c. Student interactions
 - d. Outside information
 - e. Other
11. Journal review

Appendix C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Opening questions:

1. What is your favorite thing about school?
2. How long have you attended this school?

Introductory questions:

1. Grand Tour Question- Tell me your experience with this Before-School Program
2. How does the program compare to other types of programs you have experienced in the past?

Transition questions:

1. Tell me about what it means to cooperate. What was that like?
2. Tell me about a time where you felt you helped someone. What was that like?

Key questions:

1. What things can you observe about yourself that are different now from when you first started the program that can be related to this program?
2. If you were to tell another student about the before-school program, how would you describe it?
3. What was your favorite thing about the before-school program?
4. What was something you wished was different about the before-school program?

5. Do you think that 12 weeks is too long, too short, or just right for this program?
6. Can you give me an example of something that you remember from this program?
7. Please describe the community service activity. How did you feel about participating in it?

Using concepts in practice

1. I will give you an example. Please give me some ideas about how you would use creative problem solving to figure out what to do. You and your little sister have decided to play a game. You want to play Monopoly but your sister wants to play Go Fish. Tell me how you would go about making a decision that is fair for both of you.
2. Please tell me what you would do for this example. A new student has arrived in your class. He isn't talking to anyone and by the third day you notice that he sits next to the classroom door at recess and doesn't play with any other kids. What do you think you could do?

Journal review:

1. Can you describe what these pages mean? Tell me about this section.
2. Can you tell me about this activity that you did during the program?

Ending question:

1. Is there anything else that you would like to share about this program that was not covered in these questions?

Appendix D

CODING SCHEME DEVELOPMENT CHART

Developmental Phases of Analytic Framework	Explanation and description of Resulting Change to Coding Scheme
<p>1. Initial codes were developed during the literature review and creation of the program</p>	<p>The codes were prosocial behaviors and peer relational problems. But due to the qualitative nature of the study and the research question which is “How are the lived experiences of the students changed by going through the intervention?” the focus of the coding changed. It now needed to be more exploratory to see what emerged from the data.</p>
<p>2. Based on the dissertation committee recommendations, the study’s focus became more qualitative. For a qualitative evaluative study, the interview questions had to change to reflect a more open ended evaluation of the before-school program.</p>	<p>The interview questions were added: Grand Tour Question: 1. Tell me about your experience with this Before-School Program 2. How does the program compare to other types of program you have experienced in the past. 3. What things can you observe about yourself that are different now from when you first started the program that can be related to this program? 4. If you were to tell another student about the before-school program, how would you describe it? 5. What was your favorite thing about the before-school program? 6. If you were to tell another student about the before-school program how would you describe it? 7. What was something you wished was different about the before-school program? 8. Do you think that 12 weeks is too long, too short, or just right for this program? 9. Can you give me an example of something that you remember from this program? 10. Please describe the community service activity. How did you feel about participating in it? (Used Sample Qualitative Interview Questions to guide creation of these revised questions) (St. Leonard's Community Services, 2014)</p>
<p>December 2014- The researcher conducted eight interviews involving all participants in the before-school program. The interviews were transcribed and checked for accuracy.</p>	<p>After meeting with a committee member, it was determined that the focus should continue to be on the student’s experience which may or may not include the researcher’s journal</p>

<p>The researcher's journal was also transcribed. Other sources of data included demographic data of participants and school.</p>	<p>entries (to support the student's experiences) and the a priori theory that guided the creation of the program.</p>
<p>3. The printed transcripts were divided into preliminary codes of program evaluation and other. Initial analysis began on the program evaluation. Cut and sorted the dialogue based on each activity that was mentioned during the interview.</p>	<p>During the interview, there were four times when the students were given prompts to discuss specifically the activities and exercises in the program and to evaluate them. The first time was with the open ended question: What was your favorite thing about the program? The responses fell into two categories: specific activities and friendship with one outlier who mentioned "when we did the speeches in the classes" which is referring to the community service activity. The second question that related directly to the content within the program was: What was something you wished was different about the before-school activity? This responses did not provide enough data to make any conclusions about how the students experienced the program. Four students said nothing should be changed or they don't know, two wished it could be longer, one wished it were more active P8 "like doing a lot more standing up or games", and one wanted free breakfast. The third question was: Can you give me an example of something you remember from this program? Their responses provided much more data about their experiences of the before-school program. Most of the students mentioned activities and games that we played but a few mentioned the concepts that they learned while playing the games (e.g. how to respond without being rude, helping others, cooperating, standing up for yourself, good sportsmanship). The majority of the data about the specifics of the activities in the program were demonstrated in the section of the interview where the students were told by the researcher to go through their journal folder (which they haven't seen since they first put their names on and decorated it). As they reviewed the contents, they were instructed to talk about what they see, describe what it is and whether they liked it or not. (Finding #1)</p>

<p>4. Created a document that had all participant dialogue to find codes using a word search.</p>	<p>The following words were searched: feelings, share, help, hurt, empathy, plays, community service project, fun, like, sad, cooperation, friend, good, bad, helpful, and kind. The following words had the most mentions fun (49), friend (39) and help (43). Based on this a KWIC search was conducted.</p>
<p>5. To discover the themes, the KWIC method was employed and the three most used words in the students experience to describe the program were fun, friends, and help (along with helpful, helping, helped).</p>	<p>The words around fun, friend, and help helped me to further divide fun as a descriptor word and friend and help were looked at as action words (potential prosocial behavior).</p>
<p>6. While going through the transcripts, I noticed that students were reacting to the materials in the journal with positive but general statements such as “It was cool” or “It was fun”. These descriptors were noted throughout.</p>	<p>An evaluations list was created where the following descriptive codes were found: good, hard, easy, like, awesome, nice, not boring, really well, bad, happy, silly, best, excited, cool, appreciative, hopeful, caring about others, teaches, and learned. The descriptor terms were further broke down into the areas that the students were labeling with the descriptor: overall program, community service, helping, group work and the specifics of the program (expressive arts, games, discussion/handout, group relational tasks, cooperative learning and writing prompts).</p>
<p>7. An evaluation matrix was created to see an overall picture of the codes.</p>	<p>Helping was moved from this matrix because it is more appropriate in the analysis of the “other”. Group work and group relational tasks were redundant and reduced. Fun was added to the evaluation matrix as this information was more appropriate here. Descriptor words that had two or less demonstrations were condensed into positive or negative. (Finding #2)</p>
<p>8. Revisiting the transcript, I coded the following keywords to begin to understand the “other” section of data outside the program evaluation. Coded for friend, help, topics covered in program, student interpretation of materials covered in program, and non sequitur. Also used margins to write notes as occurred to researcher.</p>	<p>Found 3 themes within transcripts based on coding and topics covered in program. No connections between non sequitur statements, occurred more with 2 students than the rest so not representative of group. Student interpretation information to be coded separately.</p>
<p>9. Themes discovered outside of descriptor words were friends (make); help (feels good); cooperation (learning/teaching). Based on this information, used material (12 questions) coded by two outside researchers.</p>	<p>Constant comparison between the analyses of the two coders found that they chose the same quote 10/12 seminal quote and in 11/12 they had at least one theme in common. Themes included: fun, friends, working together, feels good, make friends, longer, activities, happy,</p>

	time limit, be his friend, play and more cooperative.
10. All but two of the themes picked up by the outside coders are corroborated by the researcher. A matrix using the three main themes was created to demonstrate the “other” which is now titled prosocial behavior and peer relational skills. The transcripts were searched for demonstration of friendship, helping, and cooperation. And further divided into concept, action, and student experience with theme.	The two themes were time limit which referred to the specific answer about cooperation and play which is a subtheme of making friends. The student experiences of the “other” fall under the a priori themes of prosocial behavior and peer relational skills. Retention of skill based on concept, action, feeling color coded green- attained, blue- did not attain (Finding #3, Finding #4, Finding #5)
11. The final category for coding was student perceptions of changed. Each of these statements were analyzed separately and together.	These gains were student reported and in some cases not expected by the researcher when creating the program. (Finding #6)

Appendix E

EVALUATION MATRIX BASED ON DESCRIPTOR WORDS

Evaluation Matrix Based on Descriptor words											
	fun	good	hard	easy	like	awesome	happy	cool	Negative	Positive	Totals
Overall Program	17	3	0	0	1	2	0	1	2	4	30
Community Service	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	3	8
Program Activities:											
expressive arts	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	5
games	5	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	10
discussion/handouts	11	0	1	1	4	1	0	0	0	1	19
group relational tasks	6	2	4	2	2	1	0	0	3	1	21
writing prompts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
cooperative learning	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	7
Totals	41	6	9	6	11	6	3	4	5	9	100

Appendix F

OUTSIDE RESEARCHER CODES

Interview Questions Protocol	Coder 1	Coder 2	Shared seminal quotes
Grand Tour Question- Tell me your experience with this Before-School Program	Key words: fun, help/respect, friends; Themes= opportunity to learn prosocial or interpersonal skills	Themes= Fun, having friends	P5- "I've experienced how good it is to have friends working with you, counting together and having a lot of fun playing games together."
How does the program compare to other types of programs you have experienced in the past?	Key words: socialize, crafts, active, help/people others; Themes= Prosocial skills vs. Crafts/Active	Themes= New experience, working with others	P6- ".....um, I thought it would be good for me to learn more about communication and how to help people and how to help myself if something is going wrong."
Tell me about what it means to cooperate. What was that like?	Key words: fun, hard, work together, agree; Themes: Working together	Themes= Agree, working together	P3- "Sometimes it was hard but if we were doing something with directions then um it was kind of easy because everyone agreed on the rules and everyone understood." P2: "Working together, um, not fighting, um, helping each other go through hard things."
Tell me about a time where you felt you helped someone. What was that like?	Key words: felt good, helpful; Themes: felt good about myself; Helping Narratives- taught someone something new; helped when someone got hurt; help find something, stood up for someone	Themes= feels good helping others,	not same quote but both used "felt good"

What things can you observe about yourself that are different now from when you first started the program that can be related to this program?	Key words: helping, make friends, cooperate; Themes: Making friends, Help others, Confident	Themes= making friends, more cooperative	no shared quotes
If you were to tell another student about the before-school program, how would you describe it?	Key words: cooperation, friendship, community service, fun, working together; Themes: Learning prosocial skills	Themes= fun, helping others	no shared quotes
What was your favorite thing about the before-school program?	Themes: Participating in games/activities and making new friends	Theme= Making friends	P5- "My favorite thing is I get to make the ton of friends quickly, learn how to be a good friend, and have a lot of fun doing it."
What was something you wished was different about the before-school program?	Themes: Longer/more active/no response	Theme= nothing, program could be longer	P7= "Um, that it could be longer."
Can you give me an example of something that you remember from this program?	Themes: Activities and Prosocial Behaviors	Theme= Halloween activity and making a book	P3- "um, The standing up for yourself and cooperating and the Halloween activities which was being a good sportsmanship or sportsman, whatever."
Please describe the community service activity. How did you feel about participating in it?	Key words: help, exciting, happy; Themes= Description of the activity/narrative and feeling good about helping	Theme= raise money and feel happy/positive	P5- "I feel really happy about participating in it because we're helping animals that are sick, they might even need medical bills that are too expensive for the people for all those animals so they need money to spend so

			that they can keep the animals alive."
I will give you an example. Please give me some ideas about how you would use creative problem solving to figure out what to do. You and your little sister have decided to play a game. You want to play Monopoly but your sister wants to play Go Fish. Tell me how you would go about making a decision that is fair for both of you.	Key words: Taking turns, time limit, compromise; Themes: Play one then the other	Theme= play each game for a certain amount of time	P6- "I'd probably compromise with her. We can play go fish for 30 minutes a monopoly for another 30 minutes. And that can go on for like as long as you guys want to play."
Please tell me what you would do for this example. A new student has arrived in your class. He isn't talking to anyone and by the third day you notice that he sits next to the classroom door at recess and doesn't play with any other kids. What do you think you could do?	Key words: be his friend, play, help; Themes= Ask what's wrong/help or be his friend	Theme= Ask him to play, ask him to be friends	P5: "Ask him if he wants to play tag. Ask him what his favorite game is. And ask him why are you sitting down at the door during recess."

Appendix G

PROCESS/OUTCOMES MATRIX

liked that I made new friends.	P1: "I can play with him. Uh, I can ask him to be my friend."	P1: "I like meeting friends and doing stuff that I've never done before."	no example	gave example	P1: "Good"	P5: no answer	(game example) I'd play, I would play the game first and then ask her if she'd play my game next.	I feel thankful because a lot of people at the school don't get to do it. (community service)
P2: "Meeting new people and actually being friends." How to make friends?	P2: "I could probably see what's going on, what's going wrong with him. I could see what's is anything wrong like if his family or something or if he doesn't like the school. Or if he's just scared to make new friends. So I'd probably try to make new friends and see what his actions are."	P2: "Cause I've had several other friends now that we talked about the friends thing."	Well, I did. I helped other people, like explained to them, like some people, what we need to do and what else. Or what I need to do like they'll help me and I'll help them.	gave example	P2: "Excited, helpful, um, appreciative, um, happy." P2: "I like helping others"	work together	P2: "Working together, um, not fighting, um, helping each other go through hard things. Um, sometimes it would be pretty easy because when we did that battle thing and I was, think I was a leader."	P2: "It was hard and getting everybody to cooperate and make sure everything made sense. I said, 'And, um, to make sure everybody did something.'"
It tells you how to socialize with other people, the other ones are just like crafts and doing more. If he wanted to be friends. And then try to cheer him up.	P2: "I would ask him to play at recess and then try to cheer him up."	no example	no example	gave example	P2: "It made me feel good, because helped someone. And taught them how to do something."	P3 work together	It means to work as someone and agree on what you're doing and work together on it.	P3: "Um, I used to be kind of shy and I didn't like to do the first challenge. And that, now I'm not that shy anymore. And with the presenting skills, after we did that, I did my book report and I didn't feel nervous at all."
And how to be more respectful.	P4: "Try to be, be a friend to him. By shaking his hand in greeting him. And just how you normally make a friend."	P4: "uhhh, well, I know how to make, like, friends easier and uh cooperate more."	That, I like that we could help. But what I didn't really like about it is, that, well, thing grade doesn't get enough money.	gave example	P3: "I made me feel good, because helped someone. And taught them how to do something."	P3 work together	Yeah, they're fun. And they were also kind of hard. Especially the one when you had to cross each other's feet. That was hard. But passing around was easy.	P4: "uhhh, well, I know how to make, like, friends easier and uh cooperate more."
P5: "My favorite thing is get to make a ton of friends quickly, learn how to be a good friend, and have a lot of fun doing it."	P5: "Ask him if he wants to play tag. Ask him what his favorite game is. And ask him why are you sitting down at the door during recess."	P5: "I notice that having friends and playing with them is more fun than playing by yourself."	By someone gets really badly hurt, I'd go tell that teacher, run up to them and tell them and then, and then walk with them over there. Ohhhh! actually did feel good when I helped someone.	I feel really happy about participating in it because because we're helping animals that are sick, they might even need medical bills that are too expensive for the people. For all those animals so they need money to spend so that they can keep the animals alive. P6: "um, One time this girl was getting bullied and um I saw her, I saw what the bully was doing to her and he kept calling her names and I asked him to leave her alone because she never did anything to him. First, before I, because I was like really scared when I said it because I did know who the bully was going to do. Just, so I said I can do this for the little girl 'cause she was getting, and she didn't look very happy."	P5: "I actually did feel good when I helped someone."	P5 work together	P5: "Well, can why not just get another person in your family that will play with you so that you're both able to play at the same time."	"You work and you do not refuse to do anything unless it's something that you helped to do."
um, I remember like how to respond to something and not to be rude like not to say it nicely at the same time.	P6: "I could ask him if he wants to play with us. And just like try to help him, and be like yeah come play with us because I notice that you're just sitting here and we really want to play with you so can you come play with us for a little bit. And I would ask him like a, what and you play with anybody? What do you just um why do you sit there?"	I haven't really attended any or really other programs but just really wanted to try this program because um I thought it would be good for me to learn more about communication and how to help people and how to help myself if something is going wrong.	8: "Um, at first I wouldn't like really help anybody because I thought that was going to get hurt. So I would just like watch but not since I started this program I start to help people and stick up for them."		P6: "Researcher: And then what happened after that? He stopped, he started to leave her alone. (Researcher: Well, did the little girl tell you anything, did she say anything?) She's all, thank you so much now every day she comes up to me and gives me a big hug."		I'd probably compromise with her. We can play go fish for 30 minutes monopoly for another 30 minutes. And that can go on for like as long as you guys want to play.	P6: "It was, it's really fun because I didn't really know how to handle some of the things that you taught us but now I really know how to handle em and how to act with what is happening and how to help people."
Like, it's like um, (long pause), I learned how to make friends better.	P7: "Ask him to play or sit next to him at lunch. Ask him to play with my friends and like talk with him in class. If we had the chance, if we get partners in something, I could choose him."	no example	no example	gave example	P7: "Good about myself"	P7 Work together	um, we could play go fish and once we finish that we can play monopoly.	um, I guess fun and I can think of anything else.
Yeah, this is when we had to write our family members that would make you happy or cheer you on at a game.	P8: "Ask him to play with me. And play with my friends"	no example	uh, Like we're not doing something bad like we're not doing the penny drive and lying about it's going to this person and then actually keeping it for ourselves. We are actually giving it to them.	gave example	P8: "It felt good." I think it's really good, I think we are doing the right thing.	P8: "Cooperate means that, that you don't just say OK we're going to do this, and this. And then say it. Cooperate means we're gonna, we have to, agree on stuff but we have to talk about it."	um, We can play for 30 to an hour on one game and then we can go to another.	P8: "No, not really I'm more cooperative." P8: "Well because they (2 participants) put their hands on you and always they always want to be their decision."

Appendix H

ANALYTIC CATEGORY DEVELOPMENT TOOL

Research Question	Finding Statement	Outcome/Consequence	Analytic category
How are the lived experiences of the students changed by going through the intervention?	Students found four concepts to be most meaningful. They are conflicted feelings, finding support, friendship skills, and the difficulty of mending hurt feelings. Sub finding: The key to student recall is activities that were repeated, novel and fun.	Students gained understand of how to label and work through feelings.	Student self-selection of individual and meaningful outcomes. Student experience as the foundation of learning.
How are the lived experiences of the students changed by going through the intervention?	The students found the before-school program to be a positive experience which was not dependent upon the researcher. Sub finding: The biggest challenge for the student participants who represented different ages and maturity levels was learning how to work together on tasks that required high levels of communication, cooperation, and problem solving.	Students gained a positive group experience with their peers.	Student self-selection of individual and meaningful outcomes. Students experience as the foundation of learning.
How are the lived experiences of the students changed by going through the intervention?	Students learned how to use intentional actions when making and being a friend.	Students gained the ability to intentionally develop friendships.	Student interpersonal relationships impact the individual student and the overall school climate.

<p>How are the lived experiences of the students changed by going through the intervention?</p>	<p>All of the students experienced helping others which made them feel good about themselves but the ways that the gains were personalized and not conceptual demonstrations of why we help (how it can be reciprocal, involves someone in need, giving of self, etc.).</p>	<p>Students gained experience of helping others which led to good feelings.</p>	<p>Student growth as evidenced by socially constructive behavior.</p>
<p>How are the lived experiences of the students changed by going through the intervention?</p>	<p>The students understood that cooperation requires working together and mutual participation. It became difficult to cooperate for the students when there weren't structures in place such as rules, clear directions, communication, leadership, and everyone participating in a collective effort.</p>	<p>Students gained understanding of meaning of cooperation.</p>	<p>Student growth as evidenced by socially constructive behavior.</p>
<p>How are the lived experiences of the students changed by going through the intervention?</p>	<p>Students reported unique demonstrations of being changed for the better by the before-school program.</p>	<p>Students gained life skills.</p>	<p>Student self-selection of individual and meaningful outcomes.</p>

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