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AN EXAMINATION OF THE SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING SKILLS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AN URBAN DISTRICT

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EMOTIONAL LEARNING SKILLS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IN

AN URBAN DISTRICT

Gail DeBlasio

MS, Southern Connecticut State University, 1993
BS, Southern Connecticut State University, 1980

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

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Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL AND

EMOTIONAL LEARNING SKILLS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IN

AN URBAN DISTRICT

Gail DeBlasio, BS, MS

Western Connecticut State University

Abstract

A growing body of evidence has suggested that the factors determining academic
success are not limited to the cognitive realm alone. Students bring to the classroom their
natural talents, as well as all of their previous experiences, joys, sorrows, hopes and dreams.
Obtaining the essential social and emotional learning skills to meet the challenges of life and
persevere academically is a foundation pivotal to future success.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between spiritual
intelligence and the level of students' social and emotional learning skills in an effort to gain
insight into the effect one may have upon the other. This mixed method study included 181
students aged 7 to 13 years old in an urban public school district.   Data were collected using
two instruments.   Analysis of the data obtained from these instruments was used to examine
the particular characteristics of two focus groups: one group consisting of students scoring at
the higher scale of both instruments and another group consisting of students scoring at the
lower scale of both instruments.

Results of step-wise multiple regression indicate a significant ($p < .025$) predictive
relationship between students' self-perceived level of Existential Well-Being and all five

scales of the Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version (Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Adaptability, Stress Management, and General Mood). The strongest of those positive relationships existed between General Mood ($r^2 = .265$) and Adaptability ($r^2 = .153$). An examination of whether grade level made a difference in level of Social and Emotional Learning skills yielded insignificant result. Grade level was also compared to level of Spiritual Intelligence with limited results.

Qualitative analysis of two focus groups indicated that students who scored highly on the two instruments utilized in this research were more inclined to display a positive outlook on life, a belief in free will, as well as acknowledge the influence of family and community upon their lives. Students scoring lower on the instruments reported a higher incidence of feelings of guilt, of being involved in ethical dilemmas, and of the way family members influence their lives.

2012

APPROVAL PAGE

School of Professional Studies
Department of Education and Educational Psychology
Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership

Doctor of Education Dissertation

AN EXAMINATION OF THE SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL AND

EMOTIONAL LEARNING SKILLS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IN

AN URBAN DISTRICT

Presented by

Gail DeBlasio, Ed.D.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As the researcher, this dissertation represented a labor of love. However, I am fully aware of the professional risks taken by those whose approval was necessary for the study to go forth. It is for that reason I wish to publicly acknowledge these women of courage, and honor their faith in my ability to conduct this research with discretion and professionalism.

First and foremost, to my advisor, mentor, and professor, Dr. Karen Burke: She may think I was unaware of the professional risk this study represented for a woman who has devoted her life to serving God and to the acquisition of knowledge. Dr. Burke is highly respected as a professional in her field and has earned this status through hard work, and dedication. This study could have represented a threat to her professional reputation, but rather than discouraging the topic she embraced it with objectivity and enthusiasm.

The Director of our Ed.D. program, Dr. Marcia Delcourt, is acknowledged for her willingness to allow research of this nature to take place. Dr. Delcourt could have dismissed this research topic as too controversial, or not an appropriate topic for educational research. Her responsibility as program director and her relentless desire to uphold the highest standards of research for all doctoral candidates did not prevent her from recognizing my passionate desire to conduct research in this area.

Dr. Fay Brown, of the Yale School Development Program, gave me strong guidance and the courage to persevere when it appeared as though district approval would not be forthcoming. At a time when I was beginning to lose faith, she challenged me to maintain a positive attitude, and to proceed with confidence. Dr. Brown has no idea how close I was to giving up before she intervened.

Ms. Lola Nathan, a long-time advocate of teaching children holistically, had the courage to say "yes." There is a significant difference between allowing a study to take place in theory and having that study conducted at a public school in which you are entrusted with the safety and well-being of over 450 students. Her willingness to allow this research to take place represented a professional risk amongst her administrative peers, as well as a potential public relations dilemma with parents. I will be forever grateful for her faith in my ability to conduct the study ethically and professionally.

Mrs. Imma Canelli, made a decision that enabled this research to take place. There were many sympathetic ears at the district level, but only one person who was willing to sign on the dotted line. I received that precious gift in the mail on Christmas Eve of 2010, and I deeply appreciate at what great risk it had been purchased on my behalf.

To my wonderful advisors, Dr. Diana Friedlander and Dr. Patricia Anekwe, so willing to take me under their wing and share their expertise with me, I thank you for your wisdom and understanding. Your patience and openness with the topic have made this journey so much more enjoyable to traverse. It is a testimony to the strength of the Ed.D. program at Western Connecticut State University that so many alma mater are willing to mentor and advise doctoral candidates. My hope is to continue that tradition one day.

DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to my family, whose love, sacrifice, and encouragement sustained me throughout this journey, and to the little hearts that sit behind desks with burning questions that can never be asked.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

For centuries learning theorists have endeavored to define the process of knowledge acquisition. Historically, learning theory epistemology categorizes sources of knowledge into three main areas: empiricism, nativism, and rationalism (Driscoll, 2005). Empiricism refers to the belief that knowledge comes from experience. Nativism relates some knowledge as being innate, or present at birth. Rationalism holds that the mind actively constructs knowledge through reason and experience. Many theories have evolved over time in an ongoing effort to uncover the mysteries of the human mind.

In the same way educators examine and determine the pre-requisite skills students must possess to master academic content it is important to increase the knowledge base of mitigating factors enhancing, or detracting from, a child's capacity to engage in the social construct of learning (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2007). This study examined one variable contributing to this body of knowledge which is associated with the social and emotional learning skills that students must acquire to develop emotional intelligence.

In recent years Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has been linked to improved academic achievement (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2007). Students who have developed a greater degree of Emotional Intelligence (EI) often possess stronger social and emotional skills, which in turn have an impact upon their ability to function and experience success in the classroom. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) refers to SEL as being comprised of five key groups of emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Recognizing that each of these competencies delves into areas related to psychological, physical, and social health, creates a need to examine the complex network of variables which contribute to the social and emotional learning capacity of our youth. In recent years, an appreciation for the existence of multiple intelligences has enabled educators to broaden their vision of intelligence from being more unitary in nature into the multivariate phenomenon that it more accurately represents (Gardner, 1999). This study will compel the reader to consider spiritual intelligence as a cogent variable in the process of developing social and emotional learning skills.

The existence of a spiritual intelligence (SI) has been connected to each one of the epistemological traditions previously mentioned (Sisk & Torrance, 2001). SI's relationship to SEL is evident in that many of the moral and ethical constructs that comprise healthy social and emotional relationships have their basis in traditions of faith, family, and culture. It is difficult to ascertain, therefore, the influence that one's level of spirituality may exact upon an acceptance of, or the desire to emulate the conventional social norms that in a classroom can help to create optimum conditions for knowledge acquisition (Jones, 2005).

Rationale for Selecting the Topic

The purpose of this study was to determine if SI has an effect upon SEL. The reality is that educators deal with matters related to faith-based traditions and spiritual concepts everyday in the classroom. Issues of honesty arise when we ask students not to "cheat" on tests. We admonish students who have taken things that belong to someone else. We encourage kindness, tolerance and forgiveness for others' perceived transgressions. We expect students to resolve their differences peaceably and without physical altercations. We encourage them to think positively and believe in themselves. We dry their tears at the loss of

a loved one or when their family is in crisis. It is reasonable to expect that religious

sectarianism should have no place in the classroom, however, it is unrealistic to assume that a

child's sense of spirituality (or an educator's for that matter) can be divorced from everyday

school life, because it in fact permeates the classroom.

This study reflects an effort to ascertain the degree to which students' sense of

spirituality, or SI, influences the choices that they may make in school, their social

interactions, and the way they feel about themselves. It examined students' perceived level

of spiritual intelligence to determine if there was a significant impact upon developing SEL

skills. The intended purpose was that educators and policymakers would come to realize that

a student's spirituality is not something to fear, nor to deny, but rather to acknowledge the

powerful impact it may have upon a child's life.

<div align="center">

Related Literature to Support the Rationale

</div>

To create a context for this study, the review of literature is divided into two sections.

The first section will review the research and literature concerned with the independent

variable, spiritual intelligence (SI). The second section will review the research and

literature concerned with the dependent variable, social and emotional learning (SEL).

Additional aspects of the related literature will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Spiritual Intelligence

Howard Gardner first tentatively proposed the idea of spiritual intelligence in his

book, *Intelligence Reframed* (Gardner, 1999). In order to accept spiritual intelligence as an

addition to the list, however, it had to meet a set of stringent criteria that he had previously

established for the inclusion of any new intelligence. The following are the eight criteria

established by Dr. Gardner to sustain the addition of a new intelligence:

- Isolation by brain damage/neurological evidence

- The existence of prodigies, idiot savants, and exceptional individuals

- Distinguishable set of core operations

- Developmental stages with an expert end state

- Evolutionary history and plausibility

- Susceptibility to encoding in a symbol system

- Support from experimental psychological tasks

- Support from psychometric research (Gardner, 1999)

Unable to meet the eight criteria he required for the establishment of a new intelligence, spiritual intelligence was later incorporated within the possible existence of an Existential Intelligence. In response to an article written by Robert Emmons supporting the creation of spirituality as an intelligence (Emmons, 2000), Gardner later wrote *A Case Against Spiritual Intelligence*, (Gardner, 2000) in which he stated, "My hesitation about proclaiming a ninth, or existential intelligence, derives chiefly from the lack of convincing evidence about brain structures and processes dedicated to this form of computation" (p. 29).

Although Gardner ultimately chose not to adopt the concept of spirituality as an intelligence, others fully supported SI as a valuable construct and have advocated for change in the reluctance of educators to acknowledge its existence and effect upon students. Dorothy Sisk and E. Paul Torrance, long noted in the field of gifted education, have been strong supporters of spirituality as an identified intelligence and wrote a book establishing its theoretical foundations as well as the role of education in nurturing and developing spiritual intelligence (Sisk & Torrance, 2001).

In a 1998 article for *Educational Leadership,* Parker Palmer began to dialogue about the struggles of incorporating a dimension of spirituality in education:

> I want neither to violate the separation of church and state nor to encourage people who would impose their religious beliefs on others. But I am equally passionate about not violating the deepest needs of the human soul, which education does with some regularity. As a teacher, I have seen the price we pay for a system of education so fearful of things spiritual that it fails to address the real issues of our lives— dispensing facts at the expense of meaning, information at the expense of wisdom. The price is a school system that alienates and dulls us, that graduates young people who have had no mentoring in the questions that both enliven and vex the human spirit. (Palmer, 1998, p. 6)

The researchers of a Canadian study, *Spirituality, Religiousness, and Happiness in Children Aged 8-12 Years,* (n = 320), concluded that spirituality was a significant predictor of happiness. Four different measures of happiness were used, including a parents' subjective rating of their child's happiness. The spirituality instrument predicted all four measures of children's happiness, $F(5,301) > 3.02$, $p < .0125$ (Holder, Coleman, & Wallace, 2008).

The government of Australia published a discussion paper affirming the right of public school students to a curriculum that honors a holistic view of spirituality: "Spiritual well-being is often seen as a sense of connectedness to something larger than oneself, bringing with it a sense of meaning, purpose and personal value. The right to a sense of spiritual well-being is firmly embedded in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child" (Department of Education and Children's Services, 2006, p. 6).

Rowling (2008) indicated that in the last decade tragic events have precipitated the need for school communities to "face events that present significant spiritual and psychosocial challenges" (p. 241). She indicated the need for a whole school approach that is both proactive and comprehensive, allowing for expressions of spirituality and grief as a mechanism for restoring a sense of well-being.

Moberg (2002) refers to the particular dilemmas of measuring the concept of spirituality. Indicators of spiritual well-being specific to one group may be inappropriate, or even offensive, to another group with a different set of beliefs and values. Creating universal measures of spirituality, however, may not adequately reflect diverse traditions and can compromise verifiable knowledge. He indicated that the development of valid and reliable instruments will require that "both particularistic and universal goals are conscientiously targeted" (p. 57).

Social and Emotional Learning

There is a growing body of evidence indicating that nurturing the social and emotional learning skills of students not only improves psychosocial functioning, but has a direct effect upon academic achievement, as well. A meta-analysis of over 700 studies published through the year 2007 regarding programs designed to improve SEL for children between the ages of 5 and 18 yielded significant results: a 9% decrease in conduct problems, such as classroom misbehavior and aggression; a 10% decrease in emotional distress, such as anxiety and depression; a 9% improvement in attitudes about self, others, and school; a 23% improvement in social and emotional skills; a 9% improvement in school and classroom behavior; and an 11% improvement in achievement test scores (CASEL, 2008).

The authors of this expansive study concluded that evidence based SEL programs create learning environments which are safe, caring and provide developmentally appropriate classroom instruction in the areas associated with social and emotional competence. This, in turn, creates greater attachment to the school community and the likelihood of a more positive self-image that will help students avoid unhealthy choices. Ultimately, the belief is that healthy SEL will promote not only greater academic achievement, but increase the likelihood for success in the work-force and in life (CASEL, 2003).

Despite these results there is a reluctance to allow SEL curriculum to become an integrated part of the school day. A leading child psychologist, Dr. Maurice Elias, states:

Many of the problems in our schools are the result of social and emotional malfunction and debilitation from which too many children have suffered and continue to bear the consequences. Children in class who are beset by an array of confused or hurtful feelings cannot and will not learn effectively. In the process of civilizing and humanizing our children, the missing piece is, without doubt, social and emotional learning. Protestations that this must be outside of and separate from traditional schooling are misinformed, harmful and may doom us to continued frustration in our academic mission and the need for Herculean efforts in behavioral damage control and repair. The roster of social casualties will grow ever larger. (Stern, 2010, p. 2)

Bernard (2006) discussed the cognitive and behavioral characteristics of underachieving students and those with learning disabilities. He stated that more emphasis should be placed upon the way the social and emotional characteristics of struggling students may have a moderating impact on instruction. Bernard indicated that instruction that

primarily focuses on cognitive functioning and does not recognize the impact social-emotional factors associated with low achieving students can have on the learning process will not be as successful as one that is holistic and comprehensive in scope.

Elias (2006) warned of the dangers of educating children in a global society without attending to the social-emotional skills and strong moral compass that will enable students to make healthy choices and respect diverse perspectives. He indicated that SEL skills should be taught explicitly and systematically at the elementary level to ensure that they become assimilated into a child's repertoire of values. Presenting SEL in an authentic and relevant manner is seen as enforcing the likelihood that students will employ such knowledge in their problem-solving and decision-making strategies.

Nel Noddings (2006) encouraged a whole-school approach to enhancing SEL skills rather than an "add-a-course" approach when she stated that "any competency, skill, problem, or attitude that is fundamental to a fully human life should appear somehow in everything we teach" (p. 238). She indicated the importance of teachers' willingness to discuss issues involving social and ethical matters that arise in the daily work of teaching and learning. She concluded by stating that educators need to turn a diagnostic eye upon their own reliance on rules, strategies and recipes and begin to broaden their view of what it takes to produce life-long learners who derive joy from learning.

Statement of the Problem

Educators should know more about SI because of its potential effect upon the social and emotional health of students (Emmons, 2000). There is a lack of current research on this topic in this country because it is considered a politically charged, often taboo issue, which engenders a degree of professional trepidation in prospective researchers (Jones, 2005). In

his book, *Intelligence Reframed,* Howard Gardner himself states, "I must be candid and concede that I am also somewhat alarmed by the prospect of being assimilated to the many fanatics and frauds who invoke spirituality as if it were a given, or a known truth, rather than a tremendously complex phenomenon that demands careful analysis and more than a touch of humility" (Gardner, 1999, p. 59).

Overcoming the reluctance of researchers and educators to acknowledge that there is a need for, and approval of further research in this area may constitute a considerable challenge. If such research does not take place, however, we will not develop an understanding of the possible relationship between a students' SI and SEL skills, or the ways in which they perceive their SI to already be manifested in the classroom.

Significance of the Study

This study represents new research that may further the understanding of factors related to social and emotional learning skills and, ultimately, academic achievement. Interactional theories of cognitive development include the premise that learning is a social construct. If we can maximize the quality of the social interactions and relationships in our classrooms we can set the stage for an environment that is more conducive to the conditions of learning set forth by such prominent theorists as Maslow, Bandura, Vygotsky, and Bruner (Driscoll, 2005).

This research allowed students a voice in an area that has traditionally been denied expression. The body of evidence presented by this effort may help to alleviate the reluctance of other researchers to engage in related studies. Also, it may help to more firmly establish the fundamental differences between spirituality as an intelligence, and the underlying perception that many people hold of spirituality as synonymous with codified

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religion. This study did not challenge the separation of church and state; it supported the fact that no one's religious affiliation should have predominance in the classroom. It does, however, challenge educators to investigate a more global concept of spirituality respectful of diverse traditions.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are relevant to this research study:

1. **Social and emotional learning**, as defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2010) is the process of acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions; developing caring and concern for others; making responsible decisions; establishing positive relationships; and handling challenging situations capably.

2. The definition of **spiritual intelligence** used in this study was written by Frances Vaughan (2003) :

> Spiritual intelligence goes beyond conventional psychological development. In addition to self-awareness, it implies awareness of our relationship to the transcendent, to each other, to the earth and all beings. Working as a psychotherapist, my impression is that spiritual intelligence opens the heart, illuminates the mind, and inspires the soul, connecting the individual human psyche to the underlying ground of being. Spiritual intelligence can be developed with practice and can help a person distinguish reality from illusion. It may be expressed in a culture as love, wisdom and service. (p. 30)

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3. In the context of this study **religious affiliation** refers to the religious denomination or part of a religious denomination a person, institute, business, or other organization has joined or supports (AllWords.com, 1998).

4. **Interactional Theories of Cognitive Development** refer to those theorists who support the premise that learners interact with their instructor, peers, and socio-cultural environment to solve problems and construct knowledge (Driscoll, 2005).

5. **Emotional Intelligence** as defined by Daniel Goleman refers to the ability to manage feelings so that they are expressed appropriately and effectively, enabling people to work together smoothly toward their common goals. According to Goleman, the four major skills that make up emotional intelligence are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

Methodology

This study explored the effect of spiritual intelligence on the level of students' social and emotional learning skills. Data were collected using two instruments; *The Spiritual Well-Being Scale* (Ellison & Paloutzian, 1982), and the *Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version* (Bar-On & Parker, 2000). Further qualitative analysis of the data was used to examine the particular characteristics of two focus groups: one group consisting of students scoring at the higher scale of both instruments and another group consisting of students scoring at the lower scale of both instruments.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study examined the independent variable, student level of spiritual intelligence, on the dependent variable, level of emotional intelligence. Data were analyzed to determine

if a difference existed between students' grade level and the level of both spiritual and emotional intelligence. The relationship between categories of spiritual intelligence as predictors of emotional intelligence was explored. The characteristics of students scoring at both high and low levels were examined in an effort to provide more specific information regarding their respective answer choices on each instrument.

By using a systematic approach, this research addressed the following questions:

1. To what degree and in what manner can students' social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management,) be explained by level of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being) as perceived by students?

Directional Hypothesis: Spiritual intelligence, as perceived by students, can predict students' perceptions of social and emotional learning skills.

2. Is there a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being)?

Non-Directional Hypothesis: There is a significant difference between the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being).

3. Is there a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management,)?

Non-Directional Hypothesis: There is a significant difference between the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of social and

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emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management,)

4. What are the particular characteristics of students associated with a low level of measured social and emotional learning skills and a low score on the spiritual intelligence scale?

5. What are the particular characteristics of students associated with a high level of measured social and emotional learning skills and a high score on the spiritual intelligence scale?

Description of the Setting and the Subjects

The study took place in two urban, kindergarten through eighth grade public schools, located in Connecticut. Participants were males and females between the ages of 7 and 14 years old, representing grades 3 through 7. One sample of convenience was derived from a school with 464 students. Approximately 81% of the student population was of a minority race and 71% received free or reduced lunch. The second school, also a sample of convenience, had a total of 606 students, including a 91% minority population with 89.3% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. The target population was male and female students in grades three through seven. Parental consent and student assent were required to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using two instruments; *The Spiritual Well-Being Scale* (Ellison & Paloutzian, 1982), and the *Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory Youth Version* (Bar-On & Parker, 2000). Instruments were administered in a classroom setting, by the researcher. In

grades three and four the instrument was read orally to students. In grades five, six and seven the instruments were self-completed

Spiritual Well-Being Scale

The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) (Paloutzian, & Ellison, 1991) was developed as a general measure of an individual's overall spiritual well-being. It is intended to measure psychological dimensions of spirituality, not theological ones. There are two subscales. The Religious Well-Being (RWB) subscale is intended to provide a self-assessment of one's well-being as it is expressed in relation to God. The Existential Well-Being (EWB) subscale is intended to give a self-assessment of one's sense of life purpose and life satisfaction.

The SWBS is non-sectarian and was developed to be used with people from a wide range of backgrounds and beliefs. Since its initial publication in 1982, over 1,000 requests have been received to use the instrument in research ranging from a wide array of health, religious and research contexts (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991).

The BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version

BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version (EQ-i: YV) (Baron & Parker, 1999) is a 60-item, self-report instrument, designed to assess emotional intelligence in children and adolescents from ages 7 to 18 years old. It yields an overall emotional intelligence score, derived from the following dimensions of emotional intelligence: Adaptability, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, General Mood, and Stress Management. In addition, it also contains two scales related to validity and reliability: the Positive Impression and Inconsistency Index. These scales protect the integrity of the data by assessing students who are trying to provide an overly positive impression of themselves, or those who have scored inconsistently on similar survey items.

Participants respond to a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from "very seldom" to "very often," intended to indicate the degree to which each statement reflects what is true from his or her perspective. Reverse scoring is required for 20% of the items. Summed scores produce totals for domains, with higher scores indicating higher levels of emotional intelligence. The total measure of EQ is the weighted sum of the domain scores. Self-administration of the instrument is preferable. It has been suggested however, that the assessment be administered orally to children at the lower grade levels, due to possible readability issues (Ballard, 2003).

Description of the Research Design

This study used a mixed-method design. The quantitative analysis portion of the study was based on causal-comparative and correlational research designs. There was no treatment involved and the independent variable was not manipulated. The qualitative analysis was based on Grounded Theory due to the exploratory nature of this research and involved the use of two focus groups to determine the particular characteristics of students scoring at both the high and the low end of the two instruments. In an effort to reduce the risk of Type I errors due to the use of the same data in multiple comparisons a Bonferroni adjustment was made and the alpha level was set at a more conservative level ($p < .025$) for all statistical analyses.

Description and Justification of the Analyses

Inferential statistical analysis was used to examine three of the research questions.

Research Question 1: To what degree and in what manner can students' levels of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management) be explained by level of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being,

existential well-being) as perceived by students? This question was answered through the use of five multiple regression analyses using a stepwise model with an examination of the two subscales of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Religious well-being, Existential well-being) and five subscales of the Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management). The researcher elected to use a stepwise multiple regression model rather than hierarchical statistical analysis to allow for the inclusion and exclusion of variables in the equation as the strength of the independent variable changed with additional analysis of each of the five dependent variable subscales.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7) and their self-perception of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being)? This question was analyzed through the use of a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), a statistical technique used to determine whether the groups differed on more than one dependent variable. The MANOVA was used to determine whether a significant mean difference existed between the grade level of students (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being and existential well-being).

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management)? This question was analyzed through the use of a MANOVA to determine if there was a significant mean difference between the grade level of students (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management).

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Research Question 4: What are the particular characteristics of students associated with a low level of measured social and emotional learning skills and a low score on the spiritual intelligence scale? The question was addressed through the use of a focus group. As indicated in the literature review, Moberg (2002) advised that universal measures of spirituality, while appropriate for use with diverse groups, can compromise verifiable knowledge through a lack of specificity. To address this issue, five students scoring at the lower spectrum on the total score of both instruments were interviewed in a focus group setting. Student selection was based on the grade level data obtained from research questions 2 and 3. The focus group was comprised of students from the highest grade level surveyed, grade 7. The questions posed were used to obtain an explanation for low-scoring responses on both of the instruments with a greater degree of specificity and allow participants to expand on the topics. Emergent themes were coded from transcripts and are represented in the results section of the research.

Research Question 5: What are the particular characteristics of students associated with a high level of measured social and emotional learning skills and a high score on the spiritual intelligence scale? This question was also addressed through the use of a focus group. Using the same rationale as in research question four, five students scoring at the higher spectrum on the total score of both instruments were interviewed in a focus group setting. Student selection was based on the grade level data obtained from research questions 2 and 3. The focus group was comprised of students from Grade seven that displayed the greatest disparity in total mean scores. The questions posed were used to obtain an explanation for high-scoring responses on both of the instruments with a greater degree of

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specificity. Emergent themes were coded from transcripts and represented in the results

section of the research.

Limitations of the Study

Several factors could be considered limitations in this study and are discussed in

further detail in chapter three. A primary limitation of this study was the lack of precedent in

this area of research, leaving the researcher with a minimal theoretical base to rely upon.

Also, an extensive search and selection process produced two instruments that were most

aligned with the purpose and goals of this study. The instruments were pre-designed and

therefore questions asked of the participants, especially those related to measures of spiritual

intelligence, were of necessity deliberately chosen to be of a generic, non-invasive nature,

acceptable to a multi-faith population. The researcher addressed this limitation through the

use of explanatory qualitative analysis; however, much more research needs to be completed

in this regard.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will begin with a review of two theoretical foundations for this study: Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development. The remainder of the chapter will be divided into two main sections: spiritual intelligence and social and emotional learning skills. Each section will be sub-divided into three categories in an effort to provide basic information about the topic, relate it to the field of education and then refer to specific studies involving the influence these variables may exact upon overall health and well-being.

The reader is cautioned to note that in much of the literature related to spiritual intelligence the terms "spirituality," "religiosity," and "religious values," are used synonymously; which is perhaps a further indication of the need to research and comprehend the complex nature of these interdependent constructs. The intent of this literature review is to present information that would provide ample background knowledge pertinent to this study. No liberties were taken in terms of changing the key vocabulary used by different researchers, but let the reader be assured that the focus of this study is upon spiritual intelligence, not upon issues related to codified religious institutions or religious dogma.

Theoretical Foundation

Social Learning Theory

The Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura encompasses both behavioral and cognitive frameworks. He indicates that mind, behavior and the environment all play an important role in the learning process. Bandura places emphasis upon the importance of observing and modeling the attitudes, emotional reactions and behaviors of significant others.

He believes that people have the capacity to regulate their responses and behavior. Bandura proposed four principal types of experiences that can have an impact upon self-efficacy: Enactive mastery experiences encompass a learner's past history of success; vicarious experiences involve observing the success of a person whom one can relate to; verbal persuasion is the ability to orally build confidence by expressing positive support; and physiological states refer to the way in which people rely on inner emotions to guide them.

Bandura (2003) indicated that social modeling plays a role in the development of spirituality in human beings. He stated that our actions are a manifestation of our personal beliefs and that spirituality should be seen as socially grounded rather than just an intrinsic experience: "It is the spiritual commitment that gets expressed in daily living that makes a difference in people's lives" (p. 170). He emphasized that internal beliefs are often the inspiration for outward actions. The study conducted by this researcher, similarly, examined whether students' inner spiritual beliefs are outwardly expressed in their level of social and emotional learning skills.

Eaves, Hatemi, Prom-Womley, and Lenn (2008) designed a study to investigate the contribution of both social and genetic influences to religious attitudes and practices of adolescents. The study investigated the contribution of social vs. genetic influences in an effort to ascertain predominance. Self-report questionnaires were completed by twins between the ages of 11 and 18 years old ($n = 2,084$), and from their respective mothers. The results indicated that contrary to findings in adult populations, genetic influences accounted for only 10 percent of the variance in the religious attitude of the authors' adolescent population. The effects of the social environment were greater than 50 %, and a majority of

offspring similarity was explained by familial rearing. In view of the divergent studies

between adolescents and adults they stated:

> Genetic influences on social behavior are not boundless and social influences are far
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> from irrelevant to the transmission of important social behavior. However, an
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> integrated theory requires that any analysis of the roles of genes and environment be
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> embedded within a developmental framework that allows for the extended human
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> investment in parental care and education. In such a framework, there is scope for the
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> roles of genes and the social environment to change during development in ways that
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> are consistent with the changing roles of parents and the individual in the acquisition
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> and application of social values and behavior. Specifically, we show for the case of
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> religious attitudes and behavior, there is virtually no evidence for the role of genetic
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> factors during adolescence but a substantial impact of the environment shared by
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> family members shaped, in part, by parents. This finding limits the widely publicized
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> claim that genetic factors play a significant role in religious behavior (Hamer 2004)
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> and provides the impetus for a more nuanced, if still indistinct, integration of the life
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> and social sciences. (Eaves, Hatemi, Prom-Womley, & Lenn, 2008, p. 1645)

Silberman (2003) encouraged further research on spirituality using a social learning

theory framework, but cautioned that such research should reflect and examine the negative

potentials of spiritual role modeling as well as the positive ones. Along with the inspirational

leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and Mother Theresa, there have

been others who have been equally influenced by David Koresh, Osama bin Laden, and

religious leaders who have demonstrated immoral or unethical behavior. Due to the extreme

potential for impacting human emotion and behavior that spiritual role modeling may have

Silberman (2003) indicated that engaging in such research could contribute significantly to a variety of fields within psychology and beyond. She believed that an analysis of behavior inclusive of constructs related to spirituality will help to provide deeper insight into various aspects of human functioning.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

As has been noted earlier, it is difficult to separate concepts related to social and emotional learning skills without a consideration of the antecedents related to their acquisition. Many of the constructs related to SEL skills encompass issues of moral and ethical behavior the origins of which have their basis in traditions of faith (Eaude, 2003). Therefore, an examination of moral development is a prudent approach for this area of research.

Though many people decry the fact that schools should play a role in developing moral and ethical constructs in students, there is little disagreement that caregivers and teachers within a school system communicate and interpret moral expectations on a regular basis (Driscoll & Nagel, 2002). Many of the issues that both students and educators face daily are centered around judgments that are made regarding perceived moral and ethical behaviors.

Lawrence Kohlberg proposed that children go through a sequence of levels as they develop the ability to reason and comprehend the consequences for specific behaviors. Cognitive reasoning and social experiences play a role in the progression of such development (Driscoll & Nagel, 2002). These stages are loosely connected to age ranges with the acknowledgement that children and adults may not achieve the highest level of development. In fact, under certain conditions or special situations, it is not inconceivable

that individuals may regress to an earlier stage of moral development (Sutherland, Monson, & Arbuthnot, 1986).

Table 1 reflects the three levels of moral judgment established by Kohlberg. Each level is characterized by two subcategories, or stages. As children progress through the levels there is an expectation that they will be more adequately equipped to grapple with moral dilemmas than they were in the previous level.

Table 1

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

	Established Criteria	
Level of Moral Reasoning	Orientation	Stage
Level 1: Preconventional	Stage 1: Obedience or Punishment Orientation	Rules are obeyed to avoid being punished. Rules are absolute.
	Stage 2: Personal Reward Orientation	Personal needs determine right and wrong. "What's in it for me?"
Level 2: Conventional	Stage 3: Good Boy-Nice Girl Orientation	Good means "nice." Students want to please others
	Stage 4: Law and Order Orientation	Laws are absolute. Rules must be followed for the good of all

Table 1

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development, continued

	Stage 5: Social Contract Orientation	Good determined by socially agreed upon standards of individual rights.
	Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principle Orientation	Good and right are matters of conscience involving concepts of justice, human dignity, and equality

Note: Adapted from Driscoll & Nagel, 2002, p. 106.

Spiritual Intelligence

Recognition regarding the importance of this neglected area of inquiry has been established by a growing number of researchers in recent years (King & Boyatzis, 2004). In their introduction to a special issue of *Applied Developmental Science* focusing on adolescent spirituality and religiosity, King and Boyatzis (2004) posit that adolescence is a span of time characterized by a hunger to understand the meaning and purpose of life, as well as the capacity to ponder questions of ideological and existential value. It is an area largely untapped by American public schools due to perceived conflicts with the First Amendment laws providing for a separation between church and state.

Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude (2003) concur that spirituality is understudied; stating that less than 1% of articles catalogued in several major social science databases address issues related to child or adolescent spirituality. Despite this, a Search Institute's

survey of 218,000 United States public school students in grades 6 through 12 conducted during the 1999-2000 school year indicated that for 69% of students, being religious or spiritual was at least somewhat important; and within that amount, 54% of the respondents indicated it was extremely important. The authors stated that though this area of inquiry was still in its formative stage of development, it should be recognized in value as an integral facet of human existence which has spanned the course of history across a majority of cultures, the sheer magnitude of which should warrant deep consideration: "When the field of human development marginalizes spiritual development, it does a great disservice, for it builds theories and, by extension, practices of development on an incomplete understanding of our humanness" (Benson et al., 2003, p. 11).

     According to Bandura (2004) it is vitally important to understand that what theorists believe people to be will correlate with those aspects of human functioning that they choose to explore more thoroughly than those that they leave unexamined. He indicates that this is more than just a philosophical issue, because the knowledge gained through studies that are conducted eventually becomes operationalized into practice. Bandura states that, "As psychological knowledge gained through study is put into practice, the conceptions on which social technologies rest have even vaster implications. They can affect which human potentialities will be cultivated and which will be underdeveloped. In this way conceptions of human nature can influence what people become" (Bandura, 2004, p. 25).

     Whether the intrinsic human capacity for spirituality is derived from biological and physiological roots as some theorists may suggest, or evidenced by the human propensity toward spirituality that has spanned the course of history and touched every society, there is very little established work available for examination. Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude,

(2003) suggested that this facet of human nature is a variable which warrants due consideration and should be subject to further research.

Despite the enormous impact spirituality may have on the human psyche, it remains an enigma because of reluctance on the part of researchers to engage in an area that either elicits extremely passionate discourse and controversy, or is held to be sacredly private. This researcher would posit that those are the very reasons why it is important to examine this aspect of our human existence. If gaining a greater understanding of human nature and human existence is the goal of social scientists, to neglect attention to a variable that could have a strong intervening effect upon a majority of individuals represents a deficit in understanding the psychological processes of mankind.

In the course of such examination, King and Boyatzis (2004) caution the attempt to sever spirituality from religiosity, indicating that the boundaries between these constructs are not clearly defined and may overlap. Furthermore, they encourage prospective researchers to acknowledge the complexities and the limitations inherent in this relatively new field of study. The difficulty lies in an attempt to respect religious preferences by separating the concept of personal spirituality from the outward manifestation, or practice of one's faith. Current data are indicating that these are distinct, but interdependent constructs, though often in the literature "spirituality" and "religiosity" are used synonymously. Marler & Hadaway (2002) indicated that the majority of Americans see themselves as both spiritual and religious.

The public school setting for this study determines its focus upon the concept of spirituality. First Amendment issues regarding the separation of church and state would preclude the examination of one's particular organized faith, or religion, as it pertains to the

acquisition of social and emotional learning skills. The First Amendment ensures that no

one's particular denomination should have prominence in the classroom; therefore to produce

data that may create that distinction would be in conflict with the spirit of the law.

Spirituality, however, is accepted as a broad concept that embraces a diversity of

beliefs within traditions, cultures, and worldviews. It is perceived as more unifying, rather

than divisive, and thereby less threatening for individuals who may be interested in

participating in a study. It is also not as daunting for researchers seeking to undertake this

type of study (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003). Therefore, the focus of this study,

and consequently this literature review, will be spiritual intelligence and spirituality, rather

than denominationalism or codified religious institutions.

Spirituality and Education

The impact of social modeling (Bandura, 2003) in schools can be viewed as

significant because the curriculum and policies developed by those in authority are a

reflection of their beliefs regarding learning and intelligence. Johnson (2006) stated that,

"Whether our schools are traditional, self-actualizing, or transformative depends on the

theories of intelligence that serve as their organizing principles" (p. 40).   He indicated a need

to foster not only intellect, but the emotional, psychological, creative, social, physical and

spiritual potential that exists within each student. He believes that if school personnel

embrace this mission we would cultivate not only student knowledge, but the skills and

dispositions necessary to foster a compassionate, cooperative global community.

Van Bockern (2006) suggests that education is content to maintain a considerable

distance from soul-filled teaching and addressing the deep existential yearnings of youth for

fear of proselytizing and crossing the division between church and state. As a result, he

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indicated that we force students to live in two different worlds and give the appearance that we value the level of their intelligence above all else. In essence, Van Bockern stated that "schools are stomping on children's souls," (p. 220) and yet seemingly unaware of the impact a reluctance to acknowledge these longings may have upon the lives of our children. In his opinion schools have become cold, impersonal and rather shallow.

Johnson (2006) concurs, indicating that we focus too much on standardized test scores and percentile rankings to satisfy our assessment of students. He points out that we are assigning multi-dimensional humans a one-dimensional rank when we reduce who they are to mere numbers. He further states the need for children to be allowed the space and time to become contemplative and develop holistically, rather than just focusing solely upon traditional sources of data and limited views of intelligence. Despite our acknowledgement of multiple intelligences, established practices of measuring intelligence remain firmly entrenched and impede students from opportunities to realize their full potential. There is little time for students to explore gifts and talents, or to stimulate creativity because of academic expectations and a contemporary attitude towards super-structuring children into routinely organized activities.

The reluctance of educators to address issues related to student spirituality extends beyond the legal separation of church and state established in the United States and is also reflected in England, a country where developing student spirituality is an educational mandate. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is charged with ensuring that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) of children are provided for within the context of England's school curriculum. There is, however, a great deal of public disagreement as to whether spirituality should only be taught

within a faith context, or that it is an innate human quality not dependent upon a particular faith base and therefore a viable aspect of child development. In addition, despite the fact that parliamentary law advocates on behalf of developing student spirituality, there is still significant resistance on the part of administrators who feel that teachers have not been properly trained to do so (Adams, 2009).

The focus of education in the United States has transitioned since early colonial days when the primary purpose for becoming literate was to instruct children in the ways of Christian beliefs. Nord (2005) has indicated that schools inevitably reflect the changing ideas and values of the dominant culture. As Americans became more religiously diverse, religion became a source of conflict. Over time, it was expunged from public education in favor of an emphasis on the more unifying theme of "Americanism." A focus on economic advancement, pragmatism, and obtaining consumer goods took priority over the need to grapple with issues related to religion in schools. Textbooks were revised to reflect a secular analysis of historical, economic and scientific content. Issues related to social justice, ethical values, moral obligations and religious beliefs were seen as too contentious to include. A secular curriculum was considered to be a safe curriculum. Tacitly, students grew to understand that speaking of religious faith or spirituality in a public domain was taboo and not an acceptable norm. Since much of who we grow to become is shaped by our educational exposure and experiences, Nord (2005) concludes that by virtue of its censure, "Education drains the world of its spiritual meaning" (p. 199).

Concurring with the concept that speaking of one's spirituality has become socially unacceptable, Hay (2000) found in his study that by the age of 10, children are embarrassed by their own spiritual awareness. This was true of students raised in religiously affiliated

families as well as those students who, by their own admission, had significant spiritual experiences of their own. In fact, some of those same students who had profound experiences went on to admit that they would make fun of other children if they were foolish enough to speak of their spirituality in public. Hay indicates that the Western world's view of spirituality is individualistic and most commonly associated with Christian religions. He sees religion as the fallible attempt to give cultural expression to a universal spirituality, or relational consciousness, that all humans possess.

Fraser and Grootenboer (2004) spoke of a resurgence of interest towards including matters related to the development of student spirituality in national curriculums. Since 1999 it has been mandated in the curriculum of New Zealand, yet there has been little research or attention given to this concept in teacher preparation programs. In order to examine teachers' views on spirituality and the resultant implications for the children they teach, Fraser and Grootenboer conducted a qualitative study focused upon the experiences of nine teachers in two multicultural secular primary schools. Their findings indicated that while teachers cannot seem to predetermine or predict what will nurture spirituality within the classroom setting, they can cultivate a classroom climate that is conducive to nonjudgmental dialogue and discourse, thus enabling the willingness of students to reveal their innermost yearnings and beliefs. There was a sense among the participants that a prescribed curriculum might inhibit the development of student spirituality, rather than nurture open and honest inquiry.

Bellous and Csinos (2009) have similar concerns. Just as professional educators acknowledge the existence and impact of different learning styles, their research indicated that children also possess tendencies toward differing spiritual styles. A qualitative study

was conducted by Csinos which involved holding a number of focus groups with children from three different churches in southern Ontario. As a result of her inquiry into how children express their spirituality, Csinos uncovered four distinct approaches to the expression of spirituality in children: through words, emotions, symbols, and actions. The authors' are not advocating for a written curriculum, rather for the opportunity for children to be educated in a holistic environment which is neither fearful, nor repressive, of spiritual discourse, but respects this expression as a norm for behavior. They suggest a change in classroom learning culture:

> Such environments are replete with elements and activities in which teachers converse with children, allow them to learn through their emotions, wonder with them about the spiritual and supernatural, and give them opportunities to take action in the world. Although children can be quite resilient at creating their own ways to experience their ultimate concerns, if the environment is not set up to accept the expression of those concerns, they may be left feeling excluded. (Bellous & Csinos, 2009, p. 222)

Spirituality and Health

Abdei-Khalek (2007) designed a study to explore relationships between the self-rating of religiosity and both positive and negative indicators of mental health. A sample ($n = 6,339$) of Muslim Kuwaiti adolescents responded to four surveys assessing religiosity, happiness, mental health, physical health as well as anxiety and depression. All correlations were found to be significant ($p < .001$). Correlations between the four self-rating scales of religiosity, happiness, mental and physical health were positive and ranged between .18 and .55, those related to anxiety and depression were negative and ranged from -.22 to -.56.

Boys had higher mean scores on happiness, mental health and physical health. Girls had

higher mean scores on religiosity, anxiety, and depression. In the stepwise regression, the

main predictor of religiosity for both sexes was happiness

($p < .001$).

Heaven and Ciarrochi (2007) assessed the relationships between endorsement of

religious values, several major personality dimensions, and social and emotional well-being

among Australian Catholic High School teenagers ($n = 784$). There was no significant

difference in religious values for boys and girls. For girls, the mean score was 14.13 ($SD =$

4.65), whereas for boys it was 14.15 ($SD = 5.05$), $t(742) = 0.03$, ns. Religious values were

significantly positively associated ($p < .001$) with all of the social and emotional variables for

girls. The largest effect sizes were with hope ($r = .31$) and mindfulness, ($r = .31$) with the

same effect sizes for joy ($r = .25$) and acceptance ($r = .25$), as well. Among boys, religious

values were significantly associated with hope, joy, acceptance, and mindfulness . Effect

sizes were small, although the largest correlations ($p < .001$) were also with hope ($r = .25$)

and mindfulness ($r = .24$).

Dew et al. (2008) reviewed 115 articles associated with religion/spirituality as they

pertained to five clusters of adolescent psychiatric symptoms: substance abuse, delinquency,

depression, suicidality, and anxiety. Though the level of methodological rigor varied, 92%

of the articles reported at least one significant ($p < .05$) relationship between religiousness

and better mental health. Evidence was strongest for the relationship between greater

religiousness and lower levels of substance abuse, however, research was found to be lacking

in the area of anxiety disorders.

Wong, Rew, and Slaikeu (2006) completed a meta-analysis of articles examining correlations between religiosity/spirituality (R/S) and mental health. They used a systematic review strategy with six criteria:

1. Analysis included the relationship between at least one quantified R/S variable and at least one mental health variable. Qualitative studies were not included.

2. The studies focused only on adolescents' R/S.

3. Each study specifically utilized a mental health measure.

4. The mean age of the sample had to be between 10 and 20 years.

5. The research was published in a peer-reviewed journal.

6. The sample was obtained from within the United States.

A total of 20 studies across a seven-year period (1998-2004) fit all of their criteria for review. Ninety percent of the studies examined showed that higher levels of R/S were associated with better mental health in adolescents. Among their recommendations for future research they state the need to research more diverse populations, establish more rigorous measures of R/S, examine other moderating effects (i.e., socioeconomic status, life events) and investigate the potentially negative dimensions of adolescent R/S (i.e., involvement in religious cults and excessive religious guilt).

Seybold and Hill (2001) reviewed literature regarding the impact of religion and spirituality on both mental and physical health. They caution researchers to properly conceptualize the multifaceted nature of religion and spirituality, indicating that these constructs cannot be defined only by a specific set of beliefs or behaviors. They also raise questions related to the mediating role that psychosocial and contextual factors may exert in the religion-health relationship. Despite these issues, they concluded that the influence of

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religion and spirituality in mental and physical health is largely beneficial. Social networks provided through fellowship, companionship, and generosity have been linked to positive health outcomes in patients. In addition, positive emotions such as forgiveness, hope, contentment, and love are associated with medical benefits through their impact on neural pathways that connect to the endocrine and immune systems. Conversely, negative emotions and stress can cause excessive release of the neurotransmitter norepinephrine and the endocrine hormone cortisol, both linked to a significant number of negative health outcomes. This can ensue when religious and spiritual experiences are not healthy.

> Of course, religion and spirituality can also be pathological: authoritarian or blindly obedient, superficially literal, strictly extrinsic or self-beneficial, or conflict-ridden and fragmented. Indeed, such unhealthy religion or spirituality can have serious implications for physical health, having been associated with child abuse and neglect, intergroup conflict and violence, and false perceptions of control, with resulting medical neglect. (Seybold & Hill, 2001, p. 22)

Based on research connecting spiritual wellness to overall well-being and health, Briggs and Shoffner (2006) examined the relationship between spiritual wellness and depression in older adolescents ($n = 188$) and midlife adults ($n = 242$) using a 4-component quantitative measurement model of spiritual wellness. Their review of the literature revealed four recurrent themes associated with spiritual wellness: (a) *meaning and purpose in life* – referring to a sense of personal significance and motivation for living, (b) *inner resources* – relying on one's inner peace and strength, (c) *transcendence* – the ability to move outside one's own ego and focus upon others' needs and the world at large, and (d) *positive*

interconnectedness – a healthy sense of connectedness, or relationship, with living beings, including the potential for belief in the divine.

Results from their study indicated that the older adolescents (*M* = 16.9, *SD* = 10.4) had higher depression scores than the midlife adults (*M* = 8.4, *SD* = 7.6). All four components of spiritual wellness were negatively correlated with depression. However, in multiple regression analysis, meaning and purpose in life was the only significant (*p* < .01) predictor contributing to the depression scores of both older adolescents and midlife adults. In both groups, those reporting higher levels of meaning and purpose in life showed lower levels of depression.

Furrow, King, and White (2004) used a structural equation model to examine the role of religious identity in positive youth development. A sample of 801 urban public high school students responded to questionnaires measuring religious identity, personal meaning, and prosocial personality. They indicated that historically, religion has been recognized as an important source of identity development in youth, as illustrated by the varied rites of passage celebrated within religious traditions. Research linking positive identity development and prosocial concerns has been established, as well. The authors used a structural equation model to demonstrate a positive relationship (*p* < .01) between religious self-understanding, personal meaning and prosocial personality; and provide support for considering religion/spirituality as a cogent source of developmental influence.

Wagener, Furrow, King, Leffert, and Benson (2003) conducted a study based upon a Search Institute survey investigating the attitudes and behaviors of youth in grades 6 through 12 (*N* = 17,585). The results of their research (*p* < .001) questioned the unique influence of religion on adolescent risk and prosocial behavior. They proposed that it is religious

affiliation which plays the more significant role because it exposes youth to a developmental

infrastructure providing multiple sources of support and prosocial role models:

> We would argue that the model demonstrates that religious influence is better
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> understood within the network of supportive relationships, personal obligations, and
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> shared values common to religious communities. Participation in religious life results
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> in greater exposure to developmental assets and this in turn is reflected in the positive
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> relationships found between religious variables and developmental assets. (Wagener,
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> Furrow, King, Leffert & Benson, 2003, p. 281)

They also cautioned the need to examine possible negative effects of religion on

developmental outcomes, indicating that in some cases affiliation may lead to blind

obedience to authority, dependency, increased shame or guilt, and a stifling of creativity.

In a study examining the contribution of adolescent spirituality above and beyond that

of religiosity to depressive symptoms and health-risk behaviors, Cotton, Larkin, Hoopes,

Cromer, and Rosenthal (2005) assessed 134 high school students using four different

questionnaires. Spirituality was measured using the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS).

Religiosity was assessed with the inclusion of two items related to the importance of religion.

The Children's Depression Inventory-Short Form and the Youth Risk Survey were used to

assess depressive symptoms and health-risk behaviors. In bivariate analysis, both subscales

of the SWBS and the total spiritual well-being score were associated significantly *(p < .01)*

with fewer depressive symptoms (Pearson *r* = -.20, -.57, -.42, respectively). In hierarchical

multivariate regression the two subscales of the SWBS combined explained 28.9% of the

variance in depressive symptoms *(p < .001)*. The only significant predictors in the final

model (F = 8.95, *p < .05*) were existential well-being *(β = -.60, p < .001)* and importance of

religion ($\beta = .24$, $p < .05$), indicating that lower levels of existential well-being and higher

levels of religious importance were related to more depressive symptoms. The final model

related to health risk behaviors also was significant (F = 4.81, $p < .001$) and accounted for

24.4% of the variance in health risk behaviors. Existential well-being ($\beta = -.47$, $p < .001$)

was, once again, significant in the final model indicating that lower levels of existential well-

being predicted more involvement in health risk behaviors. These results supported the

researchers' hypothesis that higher levels of spirituality (not specifically religiosity) would

correlate with lower levels of depression and involvement in health risk behaviors.

In this study, the researchers found that greater importance of religion was related to

increased depression symptoms. One conjecture they offer is that the participants may have

been experiencing conflict over, or felt demands made of them, by their religion.

Conversely, they also state the possibility that as adolescents become depressed they turn to

religion for solace, which may be why they rated religion as important even as they

experienced an increase in depressive symptoms. Cotton, Larkin, Hoopes, Cromer, and

Rosenthal (2005) concluded by stating the need to examine additional psychosocial variables

that may mediate findings, as well as the necessity to conduct further research into the

interrelationships between spirituality and religiosity and how those constructs

developmentally impact adolescents.

Social and Emotional Learning

The development of social and emotional learning (SEL) skills is central to the

acquisition of emotional intelligence (EQ). SEL is the process through which children

develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to acquire healthy EQ as they grow

into adulthood. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL,

2008) defines social and emotional learning as the process of acquiring key competencies in five areas. To demonstrate the developmental nature of attaining these competencies, several examples of age appropriate behaviors provided by CASEL (2008) are briefly mentioned within each category:

Self-awareness is the ability to accurately recognize and identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as needs and values. It is an aspect of self-efficacy. At the elementary school level students developing SEL skills should be able to recognize and identify simple emotions such as anger, sadness and happiness. Middle school students should grow to recognize factors that trigger their strong emotions and stress reactions. At the high school level students are expected to understand how the expression of their emotions may affect other people (CASEL, 2008).

Self-Management involves the development of self-discipline and includes impulse control, managing stress, goal setting and organizational skills. At the elementary school level, students developing healthy SEL can describe the process of setting and working towards goals. By the middle school years, they should be able to achieve short-term personal or academic goals. High school students should be able to identify ways to use school and community resources, as well as develop the ability to strategize ways to overcome obstacles towards achieving a long-term goal (CASEL, 2008).

Social Awareness helps people to recognize and respect differences, develop empathy, and take accurate perspective of situations. Elementary school students should be able to identify how others feel by recognizing verbal, physical and situational cues. Middle school students should be able to anticipate other peoples' feelings and viewpoints in various

situations. High school students are expected to acknowledge their own ability to empathize with others (CASEL, 2008).

The *Relationship Skills* category includes communication, social engagement, and relationship building, as well as working cooperatively; negotiation, conflict management and self-advocacy. Elementary level students should be able to talk about ways to make and keep friends. Middle school students are expected to demonstrate cooperation and teamwork in promoting group goals. High school students should be able to evaluate the way they communicate with peers, teachers, and family members (CASEL, 2008).

Responsible Decision-making involves problem identification and situational analysis; problem solving; evaluating and reflecting, and exercising personal, social and ethical responsibility. Elementary level students should be able to identify the decisions they make at school. By middle school, students need to be able to employ strategies for resisting the peer pressure that may cause them to engage in unsafe or unethical activities. High school students need to be able to analyze how current decisions may affect future goals and career prospects (CASEL, 2008).

Nurturing these key competencies is seen as a crucial factor in healthy child development and a solid foundation for success in adulthood. Historically, corporate America has embraced this concept with greater enthusiasm than have American school systems (Elias et al., 1997). It was actually corporate leaders who raised the concern that institutions of learning were churning out young adults filled with content but lacking in the type of character necessary to get the job done. They also are credited with recognizing and addressing the need for EQ to become an integral aspect of corporate life. This was not solely based upon altruistic purposes, but in recognition of the fact that when employees feel

acknowledged, appreciated, and satisfied with their working environment they are likely to be more productive and take fewer days off from work, thus increasing profit margins (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

There are many who would draw the analogy between a healthy working environment and a healthy learning environment (Goleman, 2008). In essence, the factors associated with providing optimum working conditions are the same, albeit developmentally differentiated. Employees need to feel as though they are valued and appreciated, as do students. Students need to learn to work cooperatively, communicate effectively, and get along with their peers, as do employees. Managers need to provide a balanced environment wherein high expectations do not exceed stress levels, conformity does not crush creativity, and risk-taking is an acceptable norm - as do teachers.

Social and Emotional Learning and Education

The literature regarding SEL in education predominantly involves one, or both, of the following criteria: developing students' individual skill set, or enhancing the infrastructure of the learning environment to facilitate the climate for such growth.

Research has indicated that student attachment to school is strongly influenced by the learning environment. Interventions that make learning environments safer, more caring, better managed and more participatory have demonstrated an increase in student attachment to school. Additionally, this increases attendance and graduation rates, as well as improving standardized test scores (Comer, Joyner, & Ben-Avie, 2004; Osterman, 2000).

Furthermore, attachment to school may decrease the prevalence of high-risk behaviors. Najaka, Gottfredson, and Wilson (2001) used meta-analytic techniques to explore the relationship between selected risk factors and problem behaviors. Using existing

experimental and quasi-experimental studies of school-based prevention efforts, they examined academic performance, bonding to school, and social competency skills. The strongest evidence of a relationship between risk and problem behavior was found for bonding to school. Positive changes in school bonding were consistently accompanied by positive changes in problem behavior. Correlations ranged from .83 to .86, ($p < .001$), indicating a large, positive, and significant relationship.

Psychologically safe and caring classroom environments improve student ability to interact with teachers and peers, as well as interpersonal relationships within the classroom. Rimm-Kaufman and Yu-Jen (2007) studied the contribution of the Responsive Classroom (RC) approach over a two year period. In this particular study the researchers asked two questions. The first question investigated how teachers' ($n = 62$) use of RC practices contributed to childrens' ($n = 157$) academic and social growth. The second question examined if such growth may have been moderated by the presence of "environmental adversity" (Rimm-Kaufman & Yu-Jen, 2007, p. 397) at home. Results indicate that teachers' use of RC practices was associated with slightly improved reading scores, a greater bond between teachers and students, improved pro-social skills, and greater self-advocacy skills, even after controlling for family risk and children's previous years' performance. A limitation of this study was that the four instruments utilized were all teacher-reported measures, posing a threat to internal validity.

Evidence indicates that SEL instruction provides students with skills necessary to make healthy decisions that support positive development and strengthens their ability to avoid engaging in high-risk behaviors. Linacres et al. (2005) examined intervention effects of a program designed to promote specific cognitive-social-emotional skills. The goal of the

program was to decrease behavioral problems and increase academic learning. During two consecutive years 119 students and their teachers were assessed. As compared to students in the non-treatment school, students involved in the intervention program showed gains in self-efficacy, problem-solving, social-emotional competencies, and math grades. Incremental gains with medium to large effect sizes ranging from .42 – 1.01 were found in the cognitive-social-emotional domains after each year of the intervention. Multiple measures were used including self-reporting by students, as well as teacher ratings. The quasi-experimental nature of this design would be considered a limitation in this study as would the fact that outside classroom observers did not rate the social climate of the classroom as demonstrating the improvement that teacher ratings of the students indicated.

High-risk behaviors in students are associated with poor academic performance. Flay, Allred, & Ordway (2001) examined the effects of the Positive Action (PA) program on student performance and behavior in two separate school districts. The Positive Action Program combined a classroom curriculum, along with school-wide climate, family, and community components. It is based on theories of self-concept, learning, behavior, and school ecology. Using a matched control design, the researchers examined student achievement and disciplinary data in both districts. Their data indicated an achievement improvement of 16% in one district and 52% in the other, as well as reduced disciplinary referrals of 78% in one district and 85% in the other. Two limitations of this study included the fact that data were limited to elementary level students and that there was a relatively small number of school districts involved because of difficulty finding ones that kept comprehensive data on both achievement and disciplinary measures. It is also noteworthy

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that the second author of this article developed the PA program. A footnote indicated that she was not involved in the evaluative process, however.

Caprara, Babraranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, and Zimbardo (2000) conducted longitudinal research regarding contributions of early prosocial behavior to children's developmental trajectories in academic and social domains. Both prosocial and aggressive behaviors of 3rd grade students ($n = 294$) were tested as predictors of academic achievement and peer relations five years later when the students were in 8th grade. Prosocial behaviors were inclusive of cooperating, sharing, helping, and consoling. Antisocial behaviors included tendencies toward verbal and physical aggression. Results indicated that prosocialness had a strong positive effect on later academic achievement and social preferences, but early aggression had no significant effect on either outcome. The conceptual model accounted for 35% of the variance in later academic achievement, and 37% of the variance in social preferences.

Significantly, early academic achievement did not contribute to later academic achievement after controlling for effects of early prosocialness. This suggested that early prosocial behavior may be strongly linked to academic achievement during adolescence. The results of this study were in accord with the ecological perspective of sociocognitive theories (Bandura, 1997). Children's intellectual development is strongly influenced by the quality of interactions with their peers and knowledgeable adults, thus enabling prosocial students to create enduring school experiences that are conducive to academic learning.

Limited development of social-emotional skills has been associated with lower academic performance in school. Aviles, Anderson, and Davila (2006) conducted a literature review to enhance the understanding of social-emotional development in children and the

role it played in a child's ability to function in school. They used a developmental psychopathology framework to examine the relationship between children and the role school played in providing services for students with social-emotional limitations. They indicated a strong need to be cognizant of students' social and emotional needs: "Children do not leave their home/community problems at the school door. It is for this reason that we need to understand how social-emotional development plays itself out in the school setting" (Aviles, Anderson, & Davila, 2006, p. 34).

Among their findings was that diagnosis of emotional and behavioral problems have more than doubled in the past 25 years, causing a huge gap in the services needed and the services rendered, especially at the high school level. The authors' research referred to a United States Department of Education document indicating that students with social-emotional disturbances (SED) received lower grades than any other special education group; they had an average GPA of 1.7 (on a 4 point scale); only 42% percent received a high school diploma; 48% of SED students dropped out of high school altogether; 22% were arrested at least once before they left school and 58% were arrested within 5 years of leaving school.

Additionally, Aviles, Anderson, and Davila (2006) found that many effective mental health interventions were not developed or tested within the context of a school setting, thereby limiting the knowledge of approaches that would be optimally effective within the specific context of the school environment. They suggested that it is important for mental health professionals to recognize the need to go beyond developing and testing clinically focused interventions in controlled settings and contextualize interventions relevant to the realities of public school systems.

Any literature review on SEL in academic settings would be incomplete if it did not include research related to the positive, or negative, effect that teachers may have on the development of SEL skills in their students. Solomon, Watson, Delucchi, Schaps, and Battistich (1988) indicated over two decades ago that there was an imbalance in our knowledge of classroom effects given the belief that our children learn through social interactions and modeling: "We know much about the teacher and classroom antecedents of *academic* achievement, at least as assessed by standardized achievement tests, but little about the parallel antecedents of social development" (Solomon, Watson, Delucchi, Schaps, & Battistich, 1988, p. 528).

In addition to delivering curriculum, Ryan and Patrick (2001) stated that teachers set the stage for classroom social environment by creating norms and rules for students' social behavior and directing the way students will interact with classmates. Their study focused on teachers' practices around academic activities and the way those practices were perceived by the students. Operating from the premise that both academic and social development are associated with learning and achievement, Ryan and Patrick (2001) investigated the classroom social environment and academic, as well as social, outcomes.

Four dimensions of classroom environment established by the teacher were examined. *Teacher support* referred to the extent to which students felt their teacher valued and established a personal rapport with them. *Promoting interaction* reflected how often students were allowed to interact in the classroom and the quality of those interactions. *Promoting mutual respect* was an indicator of the norms for social behaviors that had been established in the classroom. *Promoting performance goals* was indicative of an emphasis

on competition and relative ability comparisons among students in the classroom(Ryan & Patrick, 2001) .

Surveys were administered to students ($n = 233$). Teacher support, promoting interaction, and promoting mutual respect were related positively ($p < .01$) to social efficacy, academic efficacy, and self-regulated learning, and related negatively to disruptive behavior. Promoting performance goals was related negatively to social efficacy, academic efficacy, and self-regulated learning, and related positively to disruptive behavior. The authors concluded that, "Students' perception of being in a classroom where the teacher encouraged classmates to respect their ideas and not laugh or make fun of them was the most important dimension of the social environment predicting changes in academic efficacy and self-regulation of school work" (Ryan & Patrick, 2001, p. 455).

Social and Emotional Learning and Health

In an effort to study current knowledge of the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and addictive disorders Kun and Demetrovics (2010) conducted a meta-anlysis of research articles related to the topic. Thirty-six publications met the criteria for inclusion that the authors established. Results of their analysis indicate that a lower level of EI is associated with intensive smoking, alcohol use, and illicit drug use. Additionally, they found that two concepts related to EI play a central role in addictions: decoding and differentiating of emotions, and regulation of emotions. The authors also examined studies relating behavioral addictions and EI. Internet addiction, impulsive buying behaviors, problem gambling, and eating disorders were among the significant behaviors negatively correlated with EI.

Kun and Demetrovics (2010) cautioned assumptions regarding causal relationships between the factors investigated, however. They noted that questions remain as to whether or not substance abuse is initiated because of an inability to deal with personal emotions and other people's feelings, or if the substance abuse itself contributed to the deterioration of skills within what could have been individuals who originally possessed a healthy level of EI.

Tsaousis and Nikolaou (2005) examined whether EI affects both the physical and the psychological aspects of health functioning. They conducted two separate studies. One study ($n = 365$) examined the relationship of EI characteristics with physical and psychological health. The second study ($n = 212$) was similar to the first, but required participants to provide information about other health related behaviors, such as smoking, drinking, and exercising. Their findings supported the hypothesis that there is a relationship between EI and health functioning. Hierarchical regression analysis conducted in both studies determined the contribution of the block of EI subscales (Perception and Appraisal, Control of Emotions, Use of Emotions, Understanding and Reasoning) to be statistically significant ($p < .01$). The authors suggested that there is a necessity for longitudinal research to be conducted in order to more deeply explore the long-term effects of EI development on health and personal lifestyle.

Blanchette and Richards (2010) reviewed current research on whether affect influences higher level cognitive processes. They indicated that until recently cognitive processes were studied completely separate from the affective system, perhaps as a result of historical distinctions between reason and passion. Recent approaches have involved interactions between basic and complex processes, between cognitive and affective variables, and between subcortical and cortical regions of the brain. Advances in technology such as

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functional magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and electroencephalography (EEG), event-related potentials (ERPs), and magnetoencephalography (MEG) have allowed researchers to develop a more sophisticated and comprehensive analysis of information processing.

The main conclusion that they drew from their review of the research was that affective variables have an important influence on higher cognitive processes. Blanchette and Richards (2010) found a large body of literature showing, in particular, a strong effect of anxiety on attention. Individuals experiencing anxiety tended to fixate on the threatening stimuli and have difficulty attending. Anxiety also lead to more threatening interpretations of information, increased estimates of the likelihood of future negative events, and increased risk aversion in decision making. Neurobiological evidence supported that the two processes are linked as evidence confirmed that the effect of anxiety on both interpretation and attention rely on the same prefrontal-amygdala network. The authors concluded by encouraging further research on the effect of emotion and mood on working memory, and the role of peripheral physiological arousal in higher level cognitive functions.

Rice, Kang, Weaver, and Howell (2008) conducted a study investigating relationships between trait anger, stress, patterns of anger expression, resources for coping, and school connectedness, and to further determine if race and gender moderated these relationships in a sample of fourth grade students ($n = 166$). Positive correlations resulted between school connectedness and both perceived social confidence ($r = .28$, $p = .003$) and behavior control ($r = .28$, $p < .001$). Negative correlations were found between school connectedness and number of stressful events ($r = -.36$, $p < .001$), anger-out ($r = -.30$, $p < .001$), and trait anger ($r = .21$, $p < .006$). As school connectedness increased, stress, anger-out, and trait anger decreased.

In multiple regression analyses to test for interactions, gender did not moderate the effects of school connectedness, however, race moderated the relationships between school connectedness and stress ($F = 4.96$, $p = .027$), and social confidence ($F = 9.51$, $p = .002$) for white students, but not for black students. White students with higher school connectedness scores had lower stress ($p < .001$) and higher social confidence scores ($p < .001$). The researchers indicate that these results may have been influenced by other factors. Geographic location, size of school, or socioeconomic status of the participants may have influenced school connectedness more than race.

Issues of resilience in child development can have a major impact upon attaining SEL skills. Resilience can be understood as a "dynamic and compensatory process of successful adaptation despite significant adversity. This concept focuses on external and internal resources, on assets and thriving behavior, and on the capacity of people to cope with detrimental environmental conditions and negative events" (Reicher, 2010, p. 219).

Masten and Obradovic (2006) studied the multifaceted nature of resilience in children. They analyzed research and found consistencies in defining the fundamental adaptive systems associated with resilience:

- The learning system of the brain (problem solving, information-processing);
- The attachment system (close relationships with caregivers, friends, romantic partners);
- The mastery motivation system (self-efficacy process, reward systems related to successful behavior);
- The stress response system (alarm and recovery system);

- The self-regulation system (emotion regulation, activation and inhibition of attention, executive functioning, behavior);

- The family system (parenting, interpersonal dynamics, expectations, cohesion, rituals, norms);

- The school system (friendships, peer group, values, norms);

- The peer system (friendships, peer group, values, norms); and

- Cultural and societal systems (religion, tradition, rituals, values, standards, laws) (Masten & Obradovic, 2006, p. 21).

This comprehensive list was intended to remind educators that resilience and the ability to obtain the SEL skills necessary to achieve healthy EI is no easy task and can be mitigated by factors beyond the control of the children, their teachers, and their loved ones. It gave insight into the complex nature of why it is that some children can overcome adversity and some cannot. The authors contend that "there are no invulnerable children" (Masten & Obradovic, 2006, p. 23) and that for some the levels of risk and adversity are so overwhelming that resilience is not activated and recovery is tremendously rare, or impossible.

Masten and Obradovic (2006) stated the need for the further research of two particular systems previously neglected in resilience research that are just now beginning to emerge in related literature. They included the regulation of arousal and response tendencies by prosocial or deviant peers, and the regulatory or relational functions of cultural systems embedded in religion and faith.

Conclusion

The goal of this literature review was to provide the reader with current research within the domains of spiritual intelligence and social and emotional learning skills. The necessity of conducting this study was further warranted by the inability of this researcher to locate any existing studies wherein the relationship between childrens' spiritual intelligence and their corresponding social and emotional learning skills have been examined.

Cognitive processes are multifaceted and extremely complex, as are the environmental, cultural, familial, and societal influences that combine in unique ways to create each one of us different from any other. At the heart of who we are, however, our basic strivings are the same. This research sought to shine light in a dark corner and add another dimension of inquiry to the rich knowledge base of child development that already exists.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study examined the relationship between students' self-reported level of spiritual intelligence (SI) and their corresponding self-reported level of social and emotional learning skills. Data were collected using two instruments, the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991) and the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version (EQ-i:YV) (BarOn & Parker, 1999). Two urban public schools in the northeast participated in this study.

This chapter represents the quantitative and qualitative methodology applied to respond to the research questions in this study. The research questions are presented. A description of the settings, subjects, and sampling procedures are provided, followed by an explanation of the research design, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations.

Research Questions

Inferential statistical analysis was used to examine research questions 1, 2, and 3. Questions 4 and 5 were analyzed qualitatively.

Research Question 1: To what degree and in what manner can students' levels of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management) be explained by level of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being) as perceived by students?

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7) and their self-perceptions of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being)?

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perceptions of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management)?

Research Question 4: What are the particular characteristics of students associated with a low level of measured social and emotional learning skills and a low score on the spiritual intelligence scale?

Research Question 5: What are the particular characteristics of students associated with a high level of measured social and emotional learning skills and a high score on the spiritual intelligence scale?

Setting, Sampling Procedures, and Research Sample

Setting and Subjects

The research was conducted at two public schools in one urban district located within the northeast region of the United States. The district website indicated that there were 123,626 residents during the 2010/2011 school year, with a median family income of $35,950. The student population was 20,759. The unemployment rate was 9.6% and this city ranks among the top 10 cities for highest crime rates per capita in the United States.

Participants were among two public grammar/middle schools located within the city. School 1 was a kindergarten through seventh grade school. The district is in the process of returning to a K-8 building model and School 1 had not obtained a grade level eight at the time of the research. School 2 was an existing kindergarten through eighth grade school. The population of the two schools differed (School 1, $n = 470$; School 2, $n = 606$), as did the ranking of the school assigned by district administration. School 1 was considered to be a high performing, Tier 1 school. School 2 had a larger population in a more socio-

economically depressed area and was categorized as a Tier 2 school. It should be noted that there is also a Tier 3, or "turn-around," level in this district at which designation underachieving schools are immersed in intensive reform initiatives. Table 2 provides disaggregated data for the student population per district, as well as in both participating schools:

Table 2

Student-level Demographic Data Comparison

	Percentage of students		
	District	School 1	School 2
Demographic Descriptor	($N = 20,759$)	($n = 470$)	($n = 606$)
Caucasian	11.08	18.90	7.80
African American	54.82	66.80	51.70
Hispanic	30.95	10.50	40.10
Asian	1.24	2.60	.20
Other	1.86	1.20	.20
Free or reduced lunch	80.50	82.80	89.30
Special education	11.27	7.00	7.00
English language learners	11.90	1.20	10.10

In both School 1 and School 2 participating students were a sample of convenience purposely selected from grades three, four, five, six, and seven. As mentioned previously, only School 2 had an 8th grade, so that grade level was not selected to be represented in this study.

Sampling Procedures

In all fairness to those who may want to replicate the study this researcher would be remiss if it was not conceded that the concept of studying spirituality in a public school was a cause for concern and discomfort among building level and central office administration. Obtaining approval to conduct this research was a long and protracted process wrought with multiple phone calls, conversations, and written requests to those who willingly gave verbal support, but were wary of attaching their signature to a formal document. Nineteen years of service in the district and the courage of three administrators in particular may have been the primary factors in securing permission to proceed.

Once authorization was received through the district (see Appendix A) and the building principal (see Appendix B) a permission slip approved by the Institutional Review Board of the researcher's University was distributed to all students in grades three, four, five, six, and seven (see Appendix C). Because of the sensitive nature of this study, the consent form was rather lengthy. This researcher felt the need to assure parents and students that the data obtained through participation would be confidential and gathered by an experienced educator within the district. It also was necessary to explain that the research topic would not infringe upon laws regarding the separation of church and state. Additionally, to increase transparency, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requested the inclusion of a sample of the type of questions that would be represented on the SWBS and a written copy of the instructions that would be provided to students prior to administration of the surveys (see Appendix E). After several weeks had passed, a second condensed consent form (see Appendix D) was distributed to those students who had not returned the first form. Both versions required parental consent and student assent for inclusion in the study. Furthermore,

an informational session was convened for parents who had questions or concerns and preferred to speak in-person rather than via email or telephone.

The participants ($n = 181$) were a sample of convenience derived through a self-selection process. The grade levels selected were based upon developmental appropriateness and the reported readability level of the two instruments used to assess levels of spiritual and emotional intelligence. Table 3 provides data with regards to participating students:

Table 3

Participants by Grade Level

	Preliminary Student Data		
Grade Level	Participants	Male	Female
Grade 3	33	17	16
Grade 4	28	15	13
Grade 5	42	19	23
Grade 6	40	18	22
Grade 7	38	13	25
Total Participants	181	82	99

The surveys were administered in a classroom by the researcher with a classroom teacher, or a paraprofessional present. The survey was read aloud to students in grades three and four. Both manuals listed oral administration as a viable option where concern for readability might be a factor. Students in grades five, six, and seven completed the surveys

independently. A copy of the instructional script, as requested by the Institutional Review Board, is provided in Appendix C.

Description of the Research Design

This Explanatory Design study was primarily quantitative with a qualitative component incorporated into the design to provide further clarification and specificity. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) indicate that an Explanatory Design is "well suited to a study in which a researcher needs qualitative data to explain significant (or nonsignificant) results, outlier results, or surprising results." (Morse, 1991, pg. 72) Furthermore, the authors indicate that the design is useful when the results from quantitative research are used to form purposeful sampling for a qualitative component. A follow-up explanation model was most suited to this research as it provided an opportunity to further clarify quantitative results.

Survey research has been noted to be an effective process for gathering information related to the opinions, attitudes, perceptions and practices of the respective participants (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). However, measures of spirituality contend with additional concerns. As previously reported, Moberg (2002) refers to the particular dilemmas of measuring the concept of spirituality. Indicators of spiritual well-being specific to one group may be inappropriate, or even offensive, to another group with a different set of beliefs and values. Creating universal measures of spirituality, however, may not adequately reflect diverse traditions and can compromise verifiable knowledge. The qualitative component of this research design was incorporated to address this concern and provide opportunities to gain deeper insight than would be obtained by the SWBS alone.

Causal comparative and correlational research designs are appropriate to use when manipulation of the independent variable is not possible, or ill advised (Gall, Gall, & Borg,

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2007). A correlational research design is used to analyze the relationship between the independent variable to the dependent variable. This design was used to analyze Research Question One by analyzing the relationship between the independent variable, spiritual intelligence, and the dependent variable, social and emotional learning skills. It also allowed the researcher to analyze relationships among multiple variables in a single study (Gall et al., 2007). Through such data analysis, the strength of each independent variable was measured for statistical value among all of the variables in relationship to the dependent variable.

A causal-comparative design supports the comparison of independent and dependent variables in order to explain existing differences on one or more of the variables (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This design supported research questions two and three. Research Question Two compared the grade level of students (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being and existential well-being). Research Question Three compared the grade level of students (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management).

Research questions Four and Five relied upon purposeful sampling and used a qualitative emergent design to examine the particular characteristics of students scoring on both the low and high end of the instruments used in this research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that an emergent design is appropriate when it is "inconceivable that enough could be known ahead of time about the many multiple realities to devise the design adequately" (p. 41), an indication of the usefulness of this design when the phenomenon under examination is largely unpredictable.

It was extremely difficult to anticipate an approach that would be effective with younger participants, for whom discussing spirituality in a public school setting along with their peers had known no precedent. The delicate nature of this topic was such that attempts to probe too deeply might embarrass, offend, or cause participants to shut-down. Although in the context of this study the qualitative component was intended to provide an explanatory function, it was also exploratory in nature due to the novelty of the discussions that would take place. An emergent design was used with two focus groups of students to elicit clarifying information and deeper insights into perceptions regarding spiritual intelligence and social and emotional learning skills.

Instrumentation

For the purposes of this study, data were collected using two instruments; the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991), and the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version (EQ-i:YV) (BarOn & Parker, 1999). The SWBS was used as a measure of the spiritual intelligence of the participants and the EQ-i:YV was used to assess the level of social and emotional learning skills that students had obtained. Both instruments were self-report surveys by design.

The Spiritual Well-Being Scale

An extensive and prolonged search for a valid and reliable instrument measuring spiritual intelligence took place. The main criteria included sensitivity to the multi-cultural traditions of the participants, readability, and the developmental appropriateness of the content. The majority of survey material examined was designed for predominantly Christian populations and therefore not suitable for use with a diverse population inclusive of multiple faith-based perspectives. The SWBS was selected because of its nonsectarian

design and because it is one of the most widely used instruments for assessing spiritual intelligence. The SWBS has been used in over 200 studies with participants of diverse age, ethnicity, and religious affiliations.

The SWBS was used to measure two distinct but overlapping dimensions of spiritual intelligence, religious well-being and existential well-being (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991). The Religious Well-Being scale yields an assessment of one's well-being in relation to a God, or a higher power. The Existential Well-Being scale, provides an assessment of sense of purpose and life satisfaction.

The SWBS is a self-report survey including 20 items that are answered on a 6-point Likert-type scale with response options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. An over-all spiritual well being score is achieved by combining the point value of all 20 responses and can range from 20 to 120 points. Higher scores indicate a greater sense of spiritual well-being.

Of the 20 items, eleven are worded positively (items numbered 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, and 20). For the positively worded items *strongly agree* responses earn six points and the *strongly disagree* responses earn one point. Examples of positively worded statements on the SWBS include, "I believe that God loves me and cares about me," and "I feel very fulfilled and satisfied with life." Conversely, nine items are negatively worded (items numbered 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 16, and 15). These items are reverse scored, with *strongly agree* responses earning one point and *strongly disagree* responses earning six points. Examples of negatively worded statements include, "I believe that God is impersonal and not interested in my daily situations," and "I don't enjoy much about life."

In addition to an overall Spiritual Well-Being score the SWBS has two subscales, Religious Well-Being (RWB) and Existential Well-Being (EWB). Each of the subscales is composed of 10 items. The Religious Well-Being subscale measures one's perceived relationship with God. Examples of RWB items include, "I don't have a personally satisfying relationship with God," and "My relationship with God helps me not to feel lonely." The Existential Well-Being subscale assesses one's perceived sense of life purpose and life satisfaction. Examples of EWB items include, "Life doesn't have much meaning," and "I believe there is some real purpose for my life." Scores for each of the two subscales are based on the sum of the respective 10-item point values. Subscale scores may range from 10 to 60 points, with higher scores indicating greater well-being.

The instrument has been used in a variety of populations ranging from religious institutions, youth groups, and mental health treatment centers, to those who are incarcerated, or terminally ill. Specific to this study, there is evidence that the instrument is valid for use with both African American and Hispanic populations (Lopez, 2007; Utsey et al., 2007).

As previously noted, the SWBS was developed in studies with over 500 subjects representative of divergent backgrounds and demographics. Research has shown that the items cluster as expected into the RWB and EWB subscales and the developers have provided evidence for construct validity through factor analysis, concurrent validity, convergent validity, and hypothesis testing with contrast groups (Gray, 2006).

Test-retest reliability coefficients for four different samples with 1, 4, 6, and 10 weeks between testings ranged from .88 to .99 for RWB, .73 to .98 for EWB, and .82 to .99 for the overall SWB score. The internal consistency reliability coefficients, based on data from over

900 subjects across seven studies, ranged from .82 to .94 for SWB (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991). These data indicated high internal consistency and reliability.

The SWBS appears to measure what is intended. Face validity is evident by examination of the content of the items (Hill & Hood, 1999). Research has indicated that SWB, RWB, and EWB are correlated positively with emotional adjustment, positive self-concept, sense of purpose in life, physical health, and emotional adjustment. They are negatively correlated with emotional maladjustment, ill health, and a lack of purpose in life (Bufford, Paloutzian, & Ellison, 1991).

One problematic issue associated with using the instrument with religious groups is that there is a tendency for participants to score very close the ceiling on the scale (Bufford, Paloutzian, & Ellison, 1991). The ceiling for the RWB subscale and the EWB subscale is 60; for the overall SWB it is 120. Bufford et al. (1991) indicated that when individuals obtain ceiling scores they cannot be meaningfully distinguished from each other.

The BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version

The BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version (EQ-i:YV) was developed by Reuven BarOn, Ph.D. and James Parker, Ph.D., and published by Multi-Health Systems, Inc. in 2000. The EQ-i:YV is a self-report survey designed to assess emotional intelligence in individuals 7 to 18 years of age. It was derived from the adult version, the BarOn EQ-i, a 133 item self-report measure developed to evaluate constructs related to the BarOn model of emotional intelligence (BarOn & Parker, 1999).

There are two versions of the BarOn EQ-i:YV, a short form, consisting of 30 items, and the long form, consisting of 60 items yielding five subscale scores and a composite emotional intelligence score. The long form of this instrument was used in this research.

The EQ-i:YV assesses five components of emotional intelligence. The five components representative of each of the subscales measured comprise a: (a) 6-item Intrapersonal scale, (b) 12- item Interpersonal scale, (c) 12- item Stress Management scale, (d) 10-item Adaptability scale, and a (e) 14-item General Mood scale.

In addition, two validity scales are provided by this instrument. The Positive Impression scale measures socially desirable responding, an indication that students are responding in ways they feel are more appropriate than accurate. The Inconsistency Scale measures random responses, or inconsistencies in the way similar items were answered. This is an important feature of the EQ-i: YV, as it reduces possible response bias and improves the reliability of the responses. If a student scores above the threshold as set forth in the authors' technical manual (BarOn & Parker, 1999), the case is eliminated from the study. Table 4 illustrates the five subscales of the BarOn Model.

Table 4

The BarOn Model of Emotional-Social Competencies

	Emotional Intelligence Competencies	
EQi:YV subscale	Related Constructs	Competencies and Skills
Intrapersonal:		Self-awareness and self-expression:
	Self-Regard	To accurately perceive, understand and accept oneself
	Emotional Self-Awareness	To be aware of and understand one's emotions
	Assertiveness	To effectively and constructively express one's emotion and oneself
	Independence	To be self-reliant and free of emotional dependency on others
	Self-Actualization	To strive to achieve personal goals and actualize one's potential
Interpersonal:		Social awareness and interpersonal relations
	Empathy	To be aware of and understand how others feel
	Social Responsibility	To identify with one's social group and cooperate with others
	Interpersonal Relationships	To establish mutually satisfying relationships and relate well with others
Stress Man.:		Emotional management and regulation:

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Table 4 (continued)

The BarOn Model of Emotional-Social Competencies

	Emotional Intelligence Competencies	
EQi:YV subscale	Related Constructs	Competencies and Skills
	Stress Tolerance	To effectively and constructively manage emotions
	Impulse Control	To effectively and constructively control emotions
Adaptability:		Change management:
	Reality-Testing	To objectively validate one's feelings and thinking with external reality
	Flexibility	To adapt and adjust one's feelings and thinking to new situations
	Problem-solving	To effectively solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature
General Mood:		Self-motivation:
	Optimism	To be positive and look at the brighter side of life
	Happiness	To feel content with oneself, others and life in general
Total ESI:		Composite score of the subscales

During administration respondents rated themselves on each of the 60 items using a Likert - point format. The response options range from (1) "Not true of me" to (2) "Very much true of me." A higher score on the scale is indicative of increased levels of emotional intelligence. Examples of items are, "When I get angry, I act without thinking," and "I usually know how other people are feeling."

To score the BarOn EQ-i:YV, raw scores for each of the subscales are converted into standard scores with a mean of 100 (SD = 15). On the Positive Impression scale, a score above 120 should be interpreted with caution as it may depict an individual who is attempting to create an exaggerated positive impression of themselves for others. Also, an Inconsistency Index score above 10 should be examined carefully and considered for elimination as it may reflect random responses recorded by the participant.

The manual (BarOn & Parker, 1999) provides the following interpretations for the resulting standard scores: 130+ is Markedly High, indicating an atypically well-developed emotional and social capacity; 120-129 is Very High, and can be attributed to an extremely well developed emotional and social capacity; 110-119 is High, revealing a well-developed social and emotional capacity; 90-109 is Average, yielding an adequate emotional and social capacity; 80-89 is Low, an indication of underdeveloped emotional and social capacity, 70-79 is Very Low and represents extremely underdeveloped emotional and social capacity, and Under 70 is Markedly Low and characteristic of individual with atypically impaired emotional and social capacity (BarOn & Parker, 1999) .

Reliability information was reviewed related to internal reliability and test-retest reliability (Ballard, 2003). Cronbach's alphas for each of the domain subscales used in the

test ranged from .65 to .90, with the lowest reliability estimates belonging to the intrapersonal scale. Test-retest reliability estimates reported correlation coefficients ranging from .77 to .89 (BarOn & Parker, 1999).

Construct validity to provide evidence for the internal structure of the instrument was established using factor analysis. During factor analysis the five subscales were captured, with items loading moderately and not cross-loading onto other scales. Intercorrelations of domain scores were low to moderate (.16 to .72), indicating that the factors are relatively distinct (BarOn & Parker, 1999). Concurrent validity was established by evaluating the youth version with the adult version. Correlations for the Intrapersonal subscale ($r = .56$) and the Adaptability subscale ($r = .63$) were lower than desired (Ballard, 2003).

The authors of the EQ-i:YV correlated their instrument with other instruments to find evidence for convergent/divergent validity of the instrument. As expected, negative correlations were for the most part obtained with the number of instruments listed in the technical manual (BarOn & Parker, 1999).

Although a large sample was used for total standardization ($n = 9,172$), the sample sizes used for reliability analyses of the youth version of the assessment were not sufficient ($n = 60$, for test-retest). It would be anticipated that a larger sample would have been used in this regard. Therefore, Ballard (2003) indicated that while the EQ-i:YV is a psychometrically sound instrument with good psychometric properties, additional evidence related to validity should be researched and accumulated.

Data Collection Procedures and Timeline

The following procedures were followed according to the proposed timeline:

1. Assistant Superintendent's formal approval was received to conduct the study in the district – December, 2010. Informal inquiries regarding the nature of the research began with contact to district central office in August of 2010. A clear protocol for seeking permission to proceed was requested, but not obtained, at that time.

2. Formal approval was requested from the building principal to conduct research at the site – December 2010. Prior to this date, discussions regarding the nature of the study were ongoing and the principals' approval was predicated upon receiving central office approval.

3. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought – December 1, 2010. IRB requested additions/revisions to the existing proposal. Final permission was granted January 4th, 2011.

4. Opportunity to share information regarding the study with staff members at a scheduled staff meeting was requested – December 2010. The study was discussed with staff and the opportunity to ask questions or state concerns was granted at that time. Staff agreed to distribute and collect the permission slips in their respective classrooms.

5. Each student in grades 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 was provided with a packet of information to be given to his or her parent/legal guardian – February 2011. The packet contained information regarding the study, a consent form, a student assent form, contact information and an invitation to attend an informational meeting to clarify any questions or concerns that may exist on the part of parents/legal guardians

and interested participants. A second consent form was sent out three weeks after the first form. Participating students received unique identification codes.

6. An informational session was provided for parents who had any additional questions, or concerns regarding the study – March 17, 2011. Two parents attended and had only a few questions. They were allowed to see a copy of the surveys their children would complete.

7. Participating students in grades 5, 6, and 7 completed the quick-score pencil and paper survey by grade level in the library media center of the school, or in a classroom. Due to the unreliability of technology in the building it was determined that the online version of the assessment would not be a viable option. Participating students in grades 3 and 4 had the instrument orally read to them in the library media center, April-May, 2011. Arrangements were made according to the convenience of the classroom teachers. Surveys were completed in one session, with make-up sessions conducted, once again, at the convenience and timing requested by the classroom teacher.

8. These data were analyzed as reported in a previous section of this chapter. The results were used to form the two focus groups for research questions four and five, June 2011.

9. Focus groups were interviewed, June 9, 2011. Student groups were taken to a private room and their conversations were audio-recorded.

10. Data obtained were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Data Analyses

In an effort to reduce the risk of Type I errors due to the use of the same data in multiple comparisons this researcher assigned a somewhat conservative alpha level ($p \leq$ .025) to all statistical procedures. The Bonferroni correction was determined by dividing the number of instruments utilized (2) by the standard alpha level of .05. This procedure is recommended when data from multiple instruments is utilized within a single research study (Huck, 2008). There are mixed viewpoints in this regard: "When more than one statistical test is performed in analyzing the data from a research study, some statisticians demand an even more stringent criterion be used for statistical significance. Other researchers have advanced the view that Bonferroni adjustments are at best, unnecessary and, at worst, deleterious to sound statistical inference. The likelihood of Type II errors is increased, so that truly important differences are deemed non-significant" (Perneger, 1998, p. 1236).

Question one was addressed using a stepwise multiple regression to examine the extent and manner that students' social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management) could be explained by level of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being) as perceived by students. The researcher elected to perform stepwise multiple regression for statistical analysis rather than forced entry, or an hierarchal approach to allow for variables to be included and excluded in the equation as the strength of the independent variables changed with each addition into the model (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006). Statistical procedures included correlations to compute the degree to which a relationship existed among the variables. An alpha of $p \leq$ .025 was used with the multiple regression models to ensure that only significantly correlated variables would serve as predictors. The stepwise approach allowed for variables with F

values greater than the threshold established to be excluded from the model, therefore resulting in a more conservative R value. Coefficient tables for each model were checked to confirm that tolerance values and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values indicated no multicollinearity problems existed for included variables.

Inferential statistics were used to answer questions two and three. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), a statistical technique used to determine whether groups differ on more than one dependent variable (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) was used to determine if there was a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being) in question two. The dependent variable for this question was spiritual intelligence and the independent variable was the grade level of students. Variance-covariance matrices were examined to ensure no violations of homoscedasticity and that equal variance between the groups existed.

A MANOVA also was used with question three to determine if there was a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perceptions of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management). Once again, student grade level was the independent variable, but for question three the dependent variable was social and emotional learning skills. Variance-covariance matrices were examined to ensure no violations of homoscedasticity and that equal variance between the groups existed.

Questions four and five were examined using qualitative methodology. Question four involved an examination of the particular characteristics of students scoring with a low level of social and emotional learning skills and a low level of spiritual intelligence. The question

was addressed through the use of a focus group. An Emergent design was established for the focus groups based on the novelty of this research and the need to elicit clarifying information and deeper insights into perceptions regarding spiritual intelligence and social and emotional learning skills. Five students from grade 7 were selected based on a rank order of their scores and their willingness to participate, however, only four were interviewed. One student was absent from this group on the scheduled interview date. Their conversation was audio-recorded, transcribed and coded. Replication of the coding was conducted by two individuals not associated with this study to ensure reliability with the results. HyperRESEARCH (Version 3.0) was utilized to analyze the data and lend support to the researcher's observations and conclusions.

Question five involved an examination of the particular characteristics of students scoring with a high level of social and emotional learning skills and a high level of spiritual intelligence. This question also was addressed through the use of a focus group using an Emergent design. Once again, this design was utilized based on the lack of precedent established for this research and the need to elicit clarifying information and deeper insights into perceptions regarding spiritual intelligence and social and emotional learning skills. Students from grade 7 were selected based on a rank order of their scores. Five students participated in this group. Their conversation was audio-recorded, transcri Replication of the coding was conducted by two individuals not associated with this study to ensure reliability with the results. HyperRESEARCH was utilized to analyze the data and lend support to the researcher's observations and conclusions. A dependability audit was conducted by an outside examiner for data and interpretational confirmability.

Limitations to the Study

Threats to External Validity

Population validity involves the extent to which research results can be generalized from the sample to the larger population (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). There are several areas of concern for external validity in this study. Causal-comparative studies do permit investigation of variables that cannot or should not be investigated, as was the case in this research. However, caution must be applied in interpreting the results because lack of randomization, manipulation of the independent variable, and control factors, can compromise the study and make it difficult to firmly establish cause-effect relationships with a high degree of confidence.

Participation in this study was strictly voluntary. It can be argued, therefore, that those who chose to become involved were already predisposed to the concept of spirituality, or spiritual intelligence, based on their level of comfort with participating. Those who elected not to respond because of discomfort with the research may have provided a richer and deeper understanding of the topic, especially during the qualitative component of the study.

Ecological validity refers to the extent to which the results can be generalized from the current environmental setting of the study to different environmental settings (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This study was conducted in an urban public school district. The experiences of students growing up in an urban, high crime, lower socioeconomic area, cannot be generalized to other areas. There are unique stressors in this environment which can impact the acquisition of SEL skills in ways that may not be an issue in other settings.

There has not been enough research in this area to generalize any findings at this point in time. It will take multiple studies of this nature before the significance of results may be verified and patterns emerge. This effort represents a foray into an area that has been traditionally under-researched (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003).

Threats to Internal Validity

The majority of threats to internal validity in this study were low, as there was no treatment implemented. One area of concern was differential selection, because the subjects were in pre-existing, intact groups they could not be randomly selected to participate in this survey research. Student scores were matched by grade level in an effort to control for this internal threat to validity.

A second area of concern involved instrumentation. Students in grades five, six, and seven, completed the two surveys independently. Due to concerns for readability levels, students in grades three and four had the tests read to them orally. Students were allowed to ask questions regarding the definition of specific words if they became confused. For example, a few students at each grade level assessed did not comprehend what the word "seldom" meant, which is noteworthy because it is used twice as an indicator in the Likert-type scale of the EQ-i:YV. Furthermore, it was unanticipated that students, especially those in the younger grades, would have as much difficulty switching back and forth from positively worded statements to negatively worded statements and understanding how to change their scoring accordingly. The SWBS, completed first in each session, was comprised of 20 statements and students did not demonstrate the appearance of frustration while they completed this instrument. The EQ-i:YV, however, was completed second. It

was comprised of 60 statements, so general fatigue may have contributed to some of the frustration regarding scoring that was expressed by several students.

There was not a significant degree of correlation between the Religious Well-Being subscale of the Spiritual Well-Being instrument used to measure spiritual intelligence, and the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version. Therefore, statistical results indicating that the variable Religious Well-Being does not make a significant contribution to the development of social and emotional learning skills should be viewed with caution. Much more research needs to be undertaken in this regard before any conclusions may be drawn.

Additionally, two focus groups were created to address the weaknesses inherent in the selection of a spirituality instrument that would be universally acceptable in nature and therefore may compromise specificity (Moberg, 2002). The multicultural, diverse population of this study determined the need to use such an instrument, as did the fact that it was being administered in a public school. The focus groups were used to address a need to ensure an opportunity for further elaboration and in an attempt to not forfeit verifiable knowledge.

Truth Value

This study was exploratory in its foundations. Much more research needs to be undertaken in this regard to substantiate and lend credibility to emergent themes. This researcher ensured truth value by means of dependability checking, interview techniques and establishing structural coherence between the data and interpretations derived from the data (Krefting, 1991).

Applicability

The researcher does not intend to make generalizations to the greater population regarding this research. Comparison of the sample to the demographic data and a dense description regarding the participants and the process is provided (Krefting, 1991).

Consistency

Peer examination has been conducted to assess consistency, and code-recode procedures were used to check for consistency in the results (Krefting, 1991).

Neutrality

The members of my advisory committee have critically examined the rationale supporting interpretations established as a result of conducting the qualitative component of this study. An external audit was conducted which required an individual not involved in the research process to examine both the process and product of the research study. The purpose was to evaluate accuracy, and to evaluate whether or not the findings, interpretations and conclusions were supported by the data. The auditor was able to provide important feedback which led to a more comprehensive interpretation of the coding utilized in the qualitative component of this research.

Statement of Ethics and Confidentiality

Permission to participate in this research was granted from the University Institutional Review Board (IRB), appropriate district representatives, the school principals, as well as parents and students. Participation was strictly voluntary. To assure confidentiality, each subject was assigned a coded identification number. Data collected by the researcher were stored in a locked cabinet and will remain confidential. At the

conclusion of this study all permission slips, identifying documentation, and electronic files will be destroyed.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between spiritual intelligence and the social and emotional learning skills of urban students. Five research questions were addressed:

1. To what degree and in what manner can students' social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management,) be explained by level of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being) as perceived by students?

2. Is there a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being)?

3. Is there a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management)?

4. What are the particular characteristics of students associated with a low level of measured social and emotional learning skills and a low score on the spiritual intelligence scale?

5. What are the particular characteristics of students associated with a high level of measured social and emotional learning skills and a high score on the spiritual intelligence scale?

Chapter Four presents the results of this research and its findings in two major sections. The first section will refer to the results garnered from quantitative analysis and will contain four subsections: (a) description of the data, (b) code and value cleaning, (c) descriptive

statistics, and (d) analysis of the findings. The second section will elaborate upon results

gathered from qualitative data used to examine research questions four and five. Chapter

Four presents the statistical procedures, as well as the quantitative and qualitative findings

related to the research questions which guided this study.

Description of the Data

The quantitative analysis in this study used the results of two survey instruments to

examine the relationship between spiritual intelligence and social and emotional learning

skills. The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991) included two subscales,

and the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version (BarOn & Parker, 1999)

included five subscales. Data were analyzed using a sample of 181 students, representative

of grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, in two urban public schools within the same district. The

researcher and an assistant administered the surveys by grade level. Each school and each

participant had an individual code, allowing the researcher to maintain confidentiality while

matching the data for both surveys. Total scores were calculated for each studied variable

and these scores were used for all statistical analyses.

Additionally, the data produced through quantitative analysis were used as the basis

for the formation of focus groups created to address questions four and five.   Emergent

themes based upon the analysis and coding of those transcripts were entered into

HyperResearch, a statistical program for qualitative research which enabled the researcher to

obtain frequencies and descriptive data.

Code and Value Cleaning

Once data collection was complete, preliminary visual review and cleaning occurred.

Due to the size of the data set ($n = 181$) it was determined that the data would be examined

using SPSS. Numerical codes assigned to each of the participants and for each of the variables in the study were checked. Data were examined for accuracy and completeness. Partially completed surveys were a factor with the EQi:YV, therefore a case by case review was necessary. Following the recommendation of the BarOn EQi:YV technical manual, when more than 6 items on the survey were omitted the test was considered invalid (BarOn & Parker, 1999) and was omitted from research.

In addition, the EQi:YV technical manual contained a provision for calculating the Inconsistency Index of respondents (BarOn & Parker, 1999) . This was done to ensure that participants consistently responded in the same manner for similar questions. As a result of both incomplete surveys and inconsistent responses, 21 cases were eliminated from the study. The sample size was reduced from 181 to 160, but still exceeded the minimum recommendation for a 20 to 1 ratio of cases to independent variables for statistical multivariate analysis (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006).

Analysis of Outliers

The next step in the code and value cleaning process involved the detection of univariate outliers. A method for the detection of outliers is the use of visual inspection of a box plot (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006). Using a box plot as an assessment for univariate outliers, the researcher examined each of the variables.

Examination of the box plots revealed outliers in two variables. The variable General Mood presented three cases with scores falling below the 25th percentile. Religious Well-Being presented seven cases with scores falling below the 25th percentile. As indicated by SPSS, none of the scores exceeded the ± 3 interquartile range considered to be an extreme score (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006).

The qualitative focus groups comprising a component of this study were based upon the results of quantitative analysis revealing scores at both the lowest and highest ends of the two instruments. Therefore, the cases receiving such scores were of extreme value to this researcher. It was determined that to preserve the integrity of the study, outliers could not be omitted from quantitative analysis and then included within the qualitative component of research. Therefore, those cases with scores falling below the 25th percentile were retained and then available for inclusion within the purposeful selection of the focus groups.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 4 represent the SWBS data set used for the statistical analysis following the initial data screening process. The means and standard deviations of these continuous variables appear reasonable, within the expectations for the results of a 6-point Likert-type scale instrument. The minimum low on the Religious Well-Being scale may reflect the inclusion of the univariate outliers in this data set. Table 5 represents the EQi:YV data set used in the statistical analysis following data screening. The means and standard deviations on the dependent variables all appear reasonable, within the expectations for the results using a 7-point Likert scale.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Subscales on the SWBS

	Descriptive Statistics			
Subscale	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
SWB - Religious	10	60	49.54	10.18
SWB - Existential	22	60	50.25	7.94

Note. N = 160

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for the EQi: YV

	Descriptive Statistics			
Subscale	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Intrapersonal	65	130	100.04	13.81
Interpersonal	65	122	98.57	14.16
Stress Manag.	65	123	86.98	12.05
Adaptability	65	130	102.19	14.85
General Mood	65	120	98.23	13.10

Note. N = 160

Analysis of Data

Research Question One

Research Question One: To what degree and in what manner can students' social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management,) be explained by level of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being) as perceived by students?

Initial review of the data explored correlations as a way to illustrate the degree to which the variables in this study have a relationship to each other. Table 7 illustrates the results of these data. Correlation results indicate relationships amongst all of the Existential Well-Being and dependent variables. Three out of five of the Religious Well-Being and dependent variables demonstrate significant relationships. Meyers, Gamst, and Guarino (2006) recommend that two variables correlated in the middle .7s or higher should not be used together in a regression or any other multivariate analysis. The correlations in Table 7 do not exceed that threshold. The correlation between the two predictor variables of the Spiritual Well Being Scale, RWB and EWB was .468 ($p < .001$).

Table 7

Correlations between the SWBS and EQi:YV Based on Student Responses

EQi: YV	Statistic	RWB	EWB
		Spiritual Well-Being Scale	
Intrapersonal	r	.126	.267**
	p	.112	.001
Interpersonal	r	.136	.262**
	p	.088	.001
Stress Management	r	-.057	-.190*
	p	.476	.016
Adaptability	r	.232**	.391**
	p	.003	.000
General Mood	r	.306**	.514**
	p	.000	.000

Note. **$p \leq 0.01$ level (2-tailed); *$p \leq 0.05$ level (2-tailed)

Multiple regression analysis followed using a stepwise model with an examination of the two subscales of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Religious well-being, Existential well-being) and five subscales of the Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management). The researcher used a stepwise multiple regression model to allow for the inclusion and exclusion of variables in

the equation as the strength of the independent variable changed with additional separate analysis for each of the five dependent variables.

The stepwise method was applied to support a stringent process, setting the inclusion level at $p < .025$ so that only the predictors that were significant at this level would be included in the equation, providing a stronger confidence level in assumptions of the predicted variance of the criterion variables (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006).

Analyses with this data set indicated no unusual code attributions. Multivariate outliers were screened by computing the Mahalanobis distance for each case. None of the values equaled or exceeded the established chi-Squared criterion, therefore it was determined that no cases would have warranted elimination at this juncture.

Tolerance values ($> .01$) and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values (< 10) were examined for each of the models to determine that no multicollinearity issues existed for any of the variables. The tolerance values and VIF values were within normal bounds, confirming the absence of multicollinearity. Regression results are presented in Tables 8 through 21. Each provides a summary of stepwise multiple regression results regarding the five dependent variables for social and emotional learning skills and the two predictor variables for spiritual intelligence.

There was no statistical significance between Religious Well-Being (RWB) and any of the dependent variables at the alpha level set; therefore, in each of the five regression analyses SPSS excluded the RWB variable from the model. Tables 8 through 21 reflect SPSS results for the variable that was included in the model, Existential Well-Being (EWB) and provide a justification for the exclusion of RWB from the model.

Table 8

Regression Analysis ANOVA for Existential Well-Being as a Predictor of Intrapersonal Skills

		ANOVA				
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	*p*
1	Regression	2164.73	1	2164.73	12.139	.001
	Residual	28175.96	158	178.33		
	Total	30340.694	159			

Table 9

Regression Analysis for Existential Well-Being as a Predictor of Intrapersonal Skills

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	*t*	*p*
1	Constant	76.69	6.79		11.30	.000
	EWB	.465	.133	.267	3.48	.001

Note: R² = .071

Table 10

Justification for the Exclusion of Religious Well-Being as a Predictor of Intrapersonal Skills

		Stepwise Regression Statistic				Collinearity
Model		Beta In	*t*	*p*	Partial Correlation	Statistic Tolerance
1	RWB	.002	.020	.984	.002	.781

Table 11

Regression Analysis ANOVA for Existential Well-Being as a Predictor of Interpersonal Skills

				ANOVA		
		Sum of		Mean		
Model		Squares	Df	Square	F	*p*
1	Regression	2191.77	1	2191.77	11.670	.001
	Residual	29673.47	158	187.81		
	Total	31865.24	159			

Table 12

Regression Analysis for Existential Well-Being as a Predictor of Interpersonal Skills

				Standardized		
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	*t*	*p*
1	Constant	75.07	6.96		10.78	.000
	EWB	.468	.133	.137	3.41	.001

Note: $R^2 = .069$

Table 13

Justification for the Exclusion of Religious Well-Being as a Predictor of Interpersonal Skills

						Collinearity	
					Partial		
Model		Beta In	*t*	Sig.	Correlation	Statistic	Tolerance
1	RWB	.016	.189	.850	.015		.781

87

Table 14

Regression Analysis ANOVA for Existential Well-Being as a Predictor of Adaptability

		ANOVA				
		Sum of		Mean		
Model		Squares	Df	Square	F	*p*
1	Regression	5367.71	1	5367.71	28.55	.000
	Residual	29701.29	158	187.98		
	Total	35068.99	159			

Table 15

Regression Analysis Summary for Existential Well-Being as a Predictor of Adaptability

				Standardized		
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	*t*	*p*
1	Constant	65.42	6.97		9.39	.000
	EWB	.732	.137	.391	5.34	.000

Note: $R^2 = .153$

Table 16

Justification for the Exclusion of Religious Well-Being as a Predictor of Adaptability

		Stepwise Regression Statistic				
					Partial	Collinearity Statistic
Model		Beta In	*t*	*p*	Correlation	Tolerance
1	RWB	.063	.756	.451	.060	.781

Table 17

Regression Analysis ANOVA for Existential Well-Being as a Predictor of Stress Management

			ANOVA		
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	*p*
1	Regression	833.35	1	833.35	5.92	.016
	Residual	22239.59	158	140.76		
	Total	23072.94	159			

Table 18

Regression Analysis for Existential Well-Being as a Predictor of Stress Management

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	*t*	*p*
1	Constant	101.47	6.97		16.83	.000
	EWB	-.288	.118	-.190	-2.43	.016

Note: R^2 = .036

Table 19

Justification for the Exclusion of Religious Well-Being as a Predictor of Stress Management

		Stepwise Regression Statistic			Partial	Collinearity Statistic
Model		Beta In	*t*	*p*	Correlation	Tolerance
1	RWB	.041	.464	.643	.037	.781

Table 20

Regression Analysis ANOVA for Existential Well-Being as a Predictor of General Mood

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p
		ANOVA				
Model						
1	Regression	7215.76	1	7215.76	56.86	.000
	Residual	20050.68	158	126.90		
	Total	27266.44	159			

Table 21

Regression Analysis Summary for Existential Well-Being as a Predictor of General Mood

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
1	Constant	55.6	5.72		9.71	.000
	EWB	.848	.113	.514	7.54	.000

Note: R^2 = .265

Table 22

Justification for the Exclusion of Religious Well-Being as a Predictor of General Mood

					Partial	Collinearity Statistic
		Stepwise Regression Statistic				
Model		Beta In	t	p	Correlation	Tolerance
1	RWB	.083	1.082	.281	.086	.781

The results of regression analysis indicate which variables can be considered a predictor. None of the models supported the stepwise inclusion of Religious Well-Being as a predictor for any of the five dependent variables. The R^2 value in a multiple regression is indicative of the strength of each variable in the relationship (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006). Table 23 reflects variables that were significant at the $p < .025$ level and provides a summary of the respective R^2 values.

Table 23

Summary of Significant Variables and Their R² Value based on Student Responses

	Dependent Variable				
Predictor	Intra-personal	Inter-personal	Adaptability	Stress Management	General Mood
EWB	.071	.069	.153	.036	.265
P	.001	.001	.001	.016	.001

Based on these data, Existential Well-Being, as perceived by students, can predict students' perceptions of their emotional intelligence. Regression results varied for each of the five dependent variables; however, they all demonstrated significance. As evidenced in Table 21, the strongest predictive relationships existed between Existential Well-Being and General Mood, as well as Existential Well-Being and Adaptability.

The data do not support a predictive relationship between Religious Well-Being and any of the dependent variables. In each of the five models, RWB was excluded from the model based on a lack of significance in its contribution.

Research Question Two

Research Question Two: Is there a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being)?

This question was analyzed through the use of a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), a statistical technique used to determine whether the groups differ on more than one dependent variable. A MANOVA was used to determine whether a significant mean difference existed between the grade level of students and their self-perception of spiritual intelligence. The independent variable was categorical with five levels (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7). The dependent variable was the students' self-perception of spiritual intelligence (Religious Well-Being and Existential Well-Being). These data were used in multiple research comparisons, therefore, the researcher continued to apply a conservative alpha level ($p < .025$) in an effort to avoid Type 1 errors.

Initially, the Bartlett's test of sphericity was analyzed and demonstrated significance ($p < .000$) indicating that there is a sufficient correlation between the two dependent variables to proceed with further analysis. Variance-covariance matrices across the independent variables were examined to ensure no homoscedasticity assumption violations existed and that the variables had equal levels of variability across a range and between the groups. The Box's M was significant at the $p < .05$ level, indicating that the dependent variable covariance matrices were unequal across the independent variable. As a result of the unequal variance, the researcher elected to proceed with caution by using Pillai's Trace as the multivariate test criterion instead of using Wilks' Lambda. According to Meyers, Gamst, and

Guarino (2006), when the Box's *M* test is statistically significant heterogeneity of variance-covariance matrices is present, therefore, Pillai's trace multivariate test should be used because of its robustness in the presence of unequal dependent variate variance.

Pillai's Trace yielded a value of .105, which was translated into an *F* statistic of 2.158. The partial eta-Squared value was .053, indicating that the independent variable (grade level) accounted for 5.3% of the variance in the dependent variate. The results were summarized as $F(8, 310) = 2.158$, $p < .025$, partial $\eta^2 = .053$.

Because the multivariate test was significant, the Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was examined. Both dependent variables were not significant, indicating homogeneity of variance. Next, the Tests of Between-Subjects Effects table provided the univariate ANOVA results for each of the two dependent variables. The Existential Well-Being (EWB) dependent measure was not significant, $F(4, 155) = 1.79$, $p = .522$, partial $\eta^2 = .044$, indicating comparable results for this variable among the grade levels. However, the univariate ANOVA for Religious Well-Being (RWB) was statistically significant $F(4,155) = 3.314$, $p < .025$, partial $\eta^2 = .079$, indicating that differences between grade levels on perceived RWB contributed to the multivariate effect. Table 24 illustrates the results of the MANOVA.

Tukey post hoc tests for RWB yielded one significant result. The mean difference between grade 4 ($n = 27$) and grade 7 ($n = 34$) was 8.03 and statistically significant at the $p < .025$ level. The table of Descriptive Statistics indicated that students in grade 4 had significantly higher RWB scores (M = 54.11, SD = 6.95) than students in grade 7 (M =

46.09, SD = 10.09). Manova results and comparison of means can be found in Tables 24 and

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Table 24

MANOVA Results for student grade level and perceived Spiritual Intelligence

	Test of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
RWB	1299.09	4	324.77	3.31	.012	.079
EWB	442.53	4	110.63	1.79	.134	.044

Note. N = 160

Table 25

Descriptive Statistics for grade level and perceived Spiritual Intelligence

	Religious Well-Being		Existential Well-Being	
	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Grade Level				
3	47.50	13.71	49.27	10.03
4	54.11	6.95	50.48	7.52
5	51.76	9.86	52.92	7.03
6	48.66	8.15	50.06	7.57
7	46.09	10.09	48.17	7.41
Total	49.54	10.18	50.25	7.94

Note. N = 160

Research Question Three

Research Question Three: Is there a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management)?

This question was analyzed through the use of a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), a statistical technique used to determine whether the groups differ on more than one dependent variable. A MANOVA was used to determine whether a significant mean difference existed between the grade level of students and their self-perception of social and emotional learning skills. The independent variable was categorical with five levels (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7). The dependent variable was the students' self-perception of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, and stress management). These data were used in multiple research questions and multiple analyses, therefore, the researcher continued to apply a stringent alpha level ($p < .025$) in an effort to avoid Type 1 errors.

First, the researcher examined the Bartlett's Test of sphericity and found that it demonstrated significance ($p < .000$) indicating that there was sufficient enough correlation between the two dependent variables to proceed with further analysis. Variance-covariance matrices across the five independent variables were analyzed to ensure no homoscedasticity assumption violations existed and that the variables have equal levels of variability. The Box's M test was not significant ($p = .367$), indicating that equal variances could be assumed. Wilks' Lambda was used as the primary multivariate test criterion. The multivariate test was not significant at the $p < .025$ level: $F(20, 501.76) = 1.226$, $p > .025$, partial $\eta^2 = .039$.

Multivariate testing indicated there was no significant difference between grade level and students perceived social and emotional learning skills. Meyers, Gamst, and Guarino (2006) state, "It should be noted at this juncture that if the multivariate test is *not* significant ($p > .05$), we would normally not proceed with any further analysis. Instead we would conclude that the dichotomous independent variable is not differentially distributed on the dependent measures." (p. 373). A review of the Test of Between-Subject Effects supported this practice, as no significant results were reflected at the $p < .025$ level assigned anyway. The findings did not yield a significant difference between grade level maturation and students' perceived social and emotional learning skills. Table 26 illustrates the results of the Multivariate Test.

Table 26

Multivariate Test Results for Grade Level of Students

	Multivariate Test Results				
Effect	Multivariate Test	Value	*F*	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Grade Level	Wilks' Lambda	.854	1.226	.227	.039

Qualitative Analysis for Questions Four and Five

Analysis of qualitative data provided support for quantitative findings and further insight into key areas of this research. In the context of this study, a Mixed Method, Explanatory Design was used to enable the researcher to gather and analyze quantitative data prior to engaging in qualitative analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Survey results obtained from quantitative analyses were used as the basis of formation for two qualitative

focus groups created to address questions four and five. Those results were rank ordered to obtain a purposeful sample of students scoring at both the lowest and highest ends of the spectrum.

Students from the highest grade level assessed were selected because of their maturity and similar academic abilities. It should be noted that the high and the low group in this study were not formulated based upon academic ability; rather, they were composed as a reflection of results obtained from the two instruments. The two focus groups were from the same school and grade level, and had demonstrated similar overall test scores on the Language Arts section of the Connecticut Mastery Test. Every effort had been made to control for intervening variables. These measures were taken in order to preserve the integrity of the information obtained during the focus group session.

Scores for students in grade 7 were rank ordered, as previously noted. The SWBS technical manual (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991) indicated that a low score on the scale would fall within the 20 – 40 range. A moderate score would fall within the 41 – 99 range. A High Score would fall within the 100 – 120 range. It should be noted that none of the students in this study ($n = 160$) scored within the low range. The overall scores for seventh grade students ranged from 64 – 118. The scores for students who participate in the low scoring focus group ranged from 64 – 90. The high group scores ranged from 105 – 114.

Guidelines provided by the BarOn technical manual (BarOn & Parker, 1999) indicated seven categories for interpreting scores: markedly low was under 70, very low was 70 – 79, low was 80 – 89, average was 90 – 109, high was 110 – 119, very high was 120 –

129, and markedly high was a score at or above 130. The seventh grade scores ranged from 65 – 110. The range for the low scoring focus group was 80 – 93. The high group scores ranged from 101 – 110.

Students were included in the focus group based upon their score category and willingness to participate. The researcher had a previously established rapport with students from one of the two schools. It was decided that this would be a beneficial factor in the formation of a single session focus group, so the participating students were all from the same school. Five students were selected for each group, however, one student was absent from the low scoring group on the scheduled meeting date. Each group met for one 20 minute session in a small conference room and their conversations were audio recorded.

An emergent design was deemed the most appropriate format for the interview as no precedent existed in this regard. Completing an anonymous survey independent of anyone else's scrutiny was very different than open speech regarding a subject not typically spoken of in a school setting. The delicate nature of the topic and the novelty of speaking about one's faith amongst peers became a source of awkwardness soon after each group was seated. The participants' body language led this researcher to adopt a more relaxed, conversational tone and assure students that they would be in control of the conversation.

Only three basic, open-ended, questions were posed. The first question asked whether there was anything about the surveys that students would like to talk about, or if they felt anything was missing from the surveys. This question was intended to reduce anxiety and provide a frame of reference that might open up conversation. The second, and most primary question, asked if what students' believed in on the inside affected the way they

behaved, or felt, towards themselves and others. The last question pertained to anything about their personal beliefs, or spirituality, that they would like to discuss.

Students in the high scoring group spoke hesitantly at first and notably gauged each others' reactions. As their discussions proceeded, however, they began to visibly relax and allow the researcher to ask probing questions based on their conversations. Students in the low scoring group were also hesitant at first. Two of the students in that group made attempts to generate a discussion regarding spirituality, but each time one of the more dominant members of the group intervened with an anecdotal incident that was related to a troubling event that had occurred. It was clear that this group was not as comfortable with the topic, nor did they strive to articulate an answer to any of the basic questions that were posed. They seemed most at ease discussing tangible events rather than abstract concepts.

Initial analysis of the transcripts yielded 17 emerging themes. The researcher then provided a copy of the transcripts and a list of 22 possible codes to two additional individuals who were not committee members associated with the study. The additional 5 codes added to the list of 17 were not derived from the transcripts and were entered to ascertain the fidelity to which the codes would be applied. Not every cluster was coded the same by all three participants. Some of the passages were not assigned a code by all three participants. Where there was a two out of two, or three out of three agreement in the scored responses, a frequency for that code was counted.

Student responses were not examined individually, only as a group. This was established as a prerequisite for administrative and district approval, as well as stated to parents who inquired about the process.

An external audit of the transcript coding indicated that further clarification between the related terms "positive outlook" and "hopefulness" should take place. After consultation with the two additional coders, it was determined that the separately coded concepts were being considered synonymously and should be combined into one code to properly represent the theme. Table 27 provides the frequency counts for the emergent codes in the transcripts based upon agreement with coding.

Table 27

Code Frequencies for Focus Groups

	Focus Groups by Score	
Code	Low on Surveys	High on Surveys
Confusion differentiating between SI and Religion	3	2
Embarrassment	3	4
Empathetic	0	1
Environmental Influence	1	5
Ethical Ambiguity	7	0
Faith Statements	0	3
Family Influence	4	6
Forgiveness	0	1
Free Will	0	8
Guilt	5	1
Positive Outlook/Hopefulness	1	10
Punishment	0	2
Self-centeredness	3	0
Self-reflective	2	2
Acknowledge SI related to SEL	1	2
Differentiates between SI and Religion	1	3

Research Question Four

Research Question Four: What are the particular characteristics of students associated with a low level of measured social and emotional learning skills and a low score on the spiritual intelligence scale?

Though students in the low scoring group did not orally express a negative outlook towards their future, the positive expressions found to be characteristic of participants in the high group were not present in their discussions. The focus of their conversations was on tangible realities, predominantly negative experiences which left them with feelings of guilt, or prayerfulness as a desire to obtain special requests, especially when they were in trouble.

S3(L) "Well, when you're in a tough situation, where like you're about to take a test, or you're like about to get in a fight, or you got suspended, or you got detention, or you got in trouble, or you got yelled at for no reason, you gotta pray for those people or for yourself because sometimes those people aren't really fun and cool, and they always gotta have a problem with you, and then when you're serious about the problem, they wanna laugh and they wanna joke around. They wanna give you detentions. But some of the teachers not here, like (teacher name)……."

Another student gave her view of the usefulness of prayerfulness:

S1(L): "Yeah. Well if I do pray to God sometimes when I really can't fix it, and I really don't want to try and waste my time anymore, when I really don't want to argue with anybody, when I want everything to go back to normal and be okay, I pray to God because I know I can't do anything about it. And if I didn't pray to God, I would cry every single day. I wouldn't be, I wouldn't even go to class. I would just skip class and cry."

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This group also vocalized a sense of duty, or obligation related to prayerfulness:

S1(L): "You know, like, if I don't pray before I go to bed, I feel sort of guilty, like, 'ugh, I didn't.' Like I owe him so much because like he died on the cross for us, so I can't even like pray before I go to bed, like, what kind of person am I, you know?"

Another student reflected on a poor choice she had made:

S2(L): "I remember the time I took some jewelry that didn't belong to me…..and my mom, she did search. And so later on that night, my stomach just started hurting. I had to use the bathroom a lot of times, and it was just like (makes gurgling noise). And then, so later on that night, near midnight, I had to run to my mom's room and put it back because it, my, the guilt was literally eating me alive."

Ethical ambiguity was a strong theme in the discussions of two vocal participants in this group. A conversation took place regarding allowing actions to be dictated by a conscious sense of right and wrong, with one student indicating the only remorse he felt was if and when he got caught, or was punished.

T: "But something inside of you said you did something wrong?"

S1(L): "Yeah"

T: "What do you do when that voice inside of you says,

That's not the right thing……"

S3(L): "Punch it 'til it go away."

Students in this group were able to articulate the influence of family on their personal beliefs, but made only one reference to environmental, or neighborhood, influences.

S1(L): "Even though I don't go to church, I still have that feeling that God is always watching over me. My mom, she likes to sing Christian songs and sometimes when she, you know, she don't go to work early, she turns on the Christian music and makes us breakfast. And sometimes I sing along in my jammies. And then, like, even though I don't go to church now, I, if, when I get older I will pursue it, and I will go to church and I will have my children baptized because even though I couldn't go to church – see, I only go to church when I'm with my grandma – cuz my grandma, she, you know, she don't play that, and if we miss church, then, you know, it's all over!"

Research Question Five

Research Question Five: What are the particular characteristics of students associated with a high level of measured social and emotional learning skills and a high score on the spiritual intelligence scale?

The most dramatic difference between the high and low group was in the area of Positive Outlook and Hopefulness. Students in the high scoring group had a much greater propensity for feeling positive about their future. There was a 10:1 ratio between the high and low group in this area. Students in the high group expressed statements such as:

S4(H): "But I believe, you know, there's a reason why things happen, like if a door closes then absolutely another one will open, so it's like you decide, you decide what you want to do, but there's also a greater work behind it. So it's not just you by yourself and you're making your choices. There's always gonna be something that's there."

Other expressions of positive outlook/hopefulness are found in this conversation by students expressing a desire to make a difference in the world:

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S5(H): "So it goes both ways. You can try and make yourself heard and sometimes you will succeed, but it's also sometimes you won't. So the lesson in it is just to keep on trying. Just go, go at it, go at it, go at it."

S2(H): "I guess I think when you have a, I think when your dream is bigger than, like, cuz I believe that I'm gonna become famous and I'm sticking to it until I get to, like, and even in high school like I wanna become somebody special so everybody could know my name and look up to me, and….."

Students in the high group also placed an emphasis on the concept of free will and the ability of people to make choices:

S3(H): "I think God decides it because everything happens for a reason and it just doesn't happen."

S2(H): "I see that and I don't, because every…, cuz now you see people in jail. They was once like us and they had a fate, like, and a dream, but now as you get older you realize some of those dreams don't happen because you gotta support your mom, or family, if someone's sick, so I think some of it is fate, I think some of it's God, but I also think some of it is your own choice, what do you do with your life."

S3(H): "Like God could only show you a path. It's up to you to take it."

The high group also placed an emphasis upon the impact of environment in their lives, indicating the importance of family, as well as the neighborhood and friends that one associated with, as predictors of both personal spirituality and general well-being:

S4(H): "But whether you like it or not, people influence you. So you could say, 'I hang out with these people, and they don't influence me,' but you will start acting like them.

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You'll carry some of their traits with you. Like, you'll talk like them, start talking like them, you'll start acting like them."

One student reflected on his friendship with a classmate:

S2(H): "Okay, um, well everybody knows him. Um, he goes here. His family don't go to church but when, like if he spends the night and I go to church, he'll come with me and stuff, and he always tell me he like church, like he always thinks church is good when he goes. And he loves to go to church with me, like, so now I'm sayin' not only if your family doesn't go to church, but you could bring your friends into your life."

There was a greater clarity in this group's ability to be expressive with regards to spirituality. This is not to say that they did not experience discomfort, or embarrassment speaking about this concept, because they had a higher frequency than the low group in that category. They pressed on despite what they were experiencing because the topic held value in their lives, though the perceived sanction against talking about one's spiritual life was vocalized:

S2(H): "I like this group because it's, not sayin the other kids are not, not aware, but they just joke around too much like of this ?, so I never talk about like my spiritual life at school because, only to some certain people that I know that go to church, not just also go to church, but I have, umm, I knew them for a lot of years, and I have a background with them."

T: "Okay. So you need to feel comfortable before you open up to people about spirituality."

Ss(H): "Yeah."

T: "And you guys know I got a lot of resistance to doing this study because I was going to dare to talk to you guys about spirituality and that's, generally speaking, not done in a public school. But I thought, well, who's to know then if this actually helps students to become better people, more educated, you know, better citizens, or whether it doesn't have any effect. You don't know unless you do a study and you find out, so eventually they said I could. Is it important to you?"

Ss(H): "Yes."

S3(H): "Very."

S4(H): "Cuz you're like making a difference."

T: "Right?"

S3(H): "You're proving something."

S2(H): "And you're making other kids that's littler than us, like I have a younger brother, and not sayin' I want him to look up to me, but I just want him to just see that his older brother is making a change and not slacking like other kids you see in the street selling drugs."

General Observations

Neither group verbalized an awareness of a relationship between spiritual intelligence and social and emotional learning skills. The high group did not overtly attribute its level of Positive Outlook/Hopefulness to spirituality. The low group, conversely, did not associate ethical ambiguity with a lack thereof. Though these two themes strongly emerged from within the group their antecedents were not articulated, or acknowledged.

Both groups also registered some confusion regarding the difference between personal spirituality and membership in an organized religion. One student in the low group expressed genuine surprise about her own beliefs:

T: "You just said you have no spiritual life because you don't go to

church. Do you think the two are synonymous? In other

words, do you think you have to go to church in order to have a

spriritual life?"

S1(L): "Yes"

T: "Does anybody disagree?"

S2(L): "I feel that you could have a spiritual life but not go to church anyway, because you might not find a church that fits you, so you could just talk to God on your own."

T: "Do you talk to God on your own?"

S1(L): "Yeah whenever I need help and I can't seem to solve the

problem."

S2(L): "So, then, you sort of do have a spiritual life."

S1(L): "You know, I didn't know that………I didn't know."

Although an emergent design was utilized within both focus group sessions, each one began with the researcher asking students if they would be willing to elaborate upon their responses to the completed surveys. Students were allowed to control the content of the conversation with the researcher asking probing questions as topics arose. In hindsight, although this design worked well with the high group, the low scoring group may have benefited from a more structured and pointed discussion. Whether it was due to heightened

levels of discomfort in articulation, or lack of exposure to the concept of spirituality, the low scoring group focused their conversations primarily upon concrete experiences related to ethical dilemmas they had previously encountered.

This researcher feels a sense of obligation to remind the reader that results obtained from the focus groups are strictly preliminary and have no basis for generalizability. Though the results provide a measure of clarity and do strengthen some of the quantitative findings, further contextual analysis might suggest that the extreme novelty of conducting such interviews in a public school and amongst one's peers, may have inhibited, or affected, student responses.

Conclusion

The analysis presented in this chapter examined spiritual intelligence and the social and emotional learning skills of students within the framework of five research questions. Question One involved step-wise multiple regression analysis used to examine the extent and manner in which students' social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management,) could be explained by level of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being) as perceived by students. Results indicated that one of the two variables associated with spiritual intelligence, Existential Well-Being, made a significant contribution ($p < .025$) to students' perceived social and emotional learning skills.

Question Two examined whether or not there was a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their perception of spiritual intelligence (Religious Well-Being and Existential Well-Being). MANOVA results did not demonstrate a significant difference between grade level and the variable Existential Well-Being;

however a significant result existed for grade level and Religious Well-Being. Specifically, there was a statistically significant ($p < .025$) difference between grade 4 and grade 7 students on the Religious Well-Being subscale of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale. Grade 4 students demonstrated mean scores that were an average of 8 points higher than those of 7th grade students.

Research Question Three examined if there was a difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their perception of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, and stress management). Results of the MANOVA utilized to analyze this question did not indicate significance. There was no evidence in the analysis to support a significant difference between the grade level of participating students and their perceived social and emotional learning skills.

Question Four involved a qualitative analysis of four seventh grade students who had scored low on the instruments utilized in this research. The students participated in a focus group intended to elicit further clarity and specificity regarding any perceived relationship between spirituality and social and emotional learning skills. An emergent design yielded themes related to perceived feelings of guilt associated with religion, ethical ambiguity, and spirituality related to the acquisition of personal desires.

Question Five involved a qualitative analysis of five seventh grade students who had scored highly on the instruments utilized in this research. Participating students focused upon a positive outlook on life, the exercise of free-will, and the role that family and environment plays in the development of their spirituality, as well as the level of social and emotional learning skills they possess. The implications of the findings of these five research questions will be discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The five sections of Chapter Five expand upon the relationship between spiritual intelligence and social and emotional learning skills. A review of the findings will be provided, as well as an extension of the analysis through related ideas and possible areas for further research. The Summary of the Study and Findings section provides an overview of the related analysis for each of the five research questions related to this study. The Relating Findings to the Literature section summarizes and compares the findings of this study as it relates to the body of research found in Chapter Two. The Implications section reflects suggestions for steps and processes that can be followed as a result of this study. The final section, Future Research, reflects upon areas of spiritual intelligence and social and emotional learning skills that would benefit from further research and analysis.

Summary of the Study and Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine and gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between spiritual intelligence (SI) and social and emotional learning (SEL) skills. Over the past few decades educators have become increasingly aware of the correlation between healthy SEL and academic achievement (Collaborative For Academic, Social, & And Emotional Learning, 2008). As a result, a multitude of programs designed to assess and strengthen SEL skills in students have been created and implemented – at no small cost. No one would deny, least of all this researcher, the importance of acknowledging the vital link between personal self-confidence, self-efficacy, and success in school. However, an examination of the antecedents for those skills we ascribe to as "healthy social

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development" can be deeply rooted or associated with the basic tenets sustaining most traditions of faith. To pretend that an analogous relationship may not exist because of the political or social ramifications associated with such an expression does a disservice to our children and ultimately, to the field of human psychology. This study examined that relationship both quantitatively and qualitatively through five guiding questions:

1. To what degree and in what manner can students' social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management) be explained by level of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being) as perceived by students?

2. Is there a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of spiritual intelligence (religious well-being, existential well-being)?

3. Is there a significant difference in the grade level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their self-perception of social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, stress management,)?

4. What are the particular characteristics of students associated with a low level of measured social and emotional learning skills and a low score on the spiritual intelligence scale?

5. What are the particular characteristics of students associated with a high level of measured social and emotional learning skills and a high score on the spiritual intelligence scale?

Data were collected in three ways: (a) spiritual intelligence was assessed using The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991) (b) social and emotional learning

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skills were assessed through the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version

(BarOn & Parker, 1999) and (c) qualitative focus groups were used to further examine the

particular characteristics of students scoring both high and low on the survey instruments.

Research Question One reflected a correlational research design wherein stepwise multiple

regression analysis was utilized to examine the relationship between the five dependent

variables related to social and emotional learning skills and the two criterion variables related

to spiritual intelligence to measure the predictive strength of spiritual intelligence on social

and emotional learning skills. Research Questions Two and Three used a causal-comparative

research design to compare students' grade level (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) to their self-

perception of spiritual intelligence (Religious Well-Being and Existential Well-Being) and

social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood,

stress management). Research Questions Four and Five qualitatively examined through an

Emergent Design the particular characteristics of two focus groups composed of students

scoring within the lowest and highest range on the scale for the two instruments.

A total of 181 students were initially involved in this study, including 82 males and

99 females. That amount was reduced to 160 following the data cleaning procedures that

took place prior to statistical analyses. The participants in this research were a self-selected

sample of convenience. The target population was students in grades 3 through grade 7.

Research was conducted in two urban public schools within the same district.

Research Question One

Stepwise multiple regression was used to examine the extent and manner that

students' social and emotional learning skills (adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal,

general mood, stress management,) could be explained by level of spiritual intelligence

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(religious well-being, existential well-being) as perceived by students. Results for the five

dependent variables measured indicated that one of the two independent variables associated

with spiritual intelligence had significant predictive value. The predictor variable Religious

Well-Being did not make a significant contribution in any of the five models and therefore

was excluded from the output by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Existential Well-Being was significant ($p < .025$) in each of the five models. The strongest

contributions to the model were General Mood and Adaptability.

Research Question Two

Question two examined whether or not there was a significant difference in the grade

level of students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their perception of spiritual intelligence

(Religious Well-Being and Existential Well-Being). This inquiry by the researcher was

based on a desire to investigate whether maturation would have a positive effect on student

self-perception of spiritual intelligence, or whether maturation might be inhibited by cultural

norms discouraging its expression, as indicated in the literature review. MANOVA results

did not demonstrate a significant difference between grade level and the variable Existential

Well-Being. A significant result existed for grade level and Religious Well-Being.

Specifically, there was a statistically significant ($p < .025$) difference between grade 4 and

grade 7 students on the Religious Well-Being subscale of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale.

Grade 4 students demonstrated mean scores that were an average of 8 points higher than

those of 7th grade students (partial $\eta^2 = .079$).

Research Question Three

Research question three examined if there was a difference in the grade level of

students (grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and their perception of social and emotional learning skills

(adaptability, interpersonal, intrapersonal, general mood, and stress management). Again, the researcher was attempting to examine whether or not maturation would make a significant difference in students' level of social and emotional learning skills. Results of the MANOVA utilized to analyze this question did not indicate significance. There was no evidence in the SPSS analysis to support a significant difference between the grade level of participating students and their perceived social and emotional learning skills ($p > .025$).

Research Question Four

Question four involved a qualitative analysis of four seventh grade students who had scored low on the two instruments utilized in this research. The students participated in a single occurrence focus group intended to elicit further clarity and specificity regarding any perceived relationship between spirituality and social and emotional learning skills. The researcher also wanted to determine if any particular themes would arise as a result of low scores on both instruments. An emergent design was utilized because of the novelty of this type of research. It yielded themes related to perceived feelings of guilt associated with religion, ethical ambiguity, and spirituality related to the fulfillment of personal desires. The participants, perhaps as evident in their scores, were much more reluctant to engage in conversation regarding their personal spirituality. As a result, the researcher was unable to ascertain whether their responses reflected actual perceptions, or an extreme level of discomfort with a topic they were not comfortable with articulating, or did not know how to express.

Research Question Five

Question five involved a qualitative analysis of five seventh grade students who had scored highly on the instruments utilized in this research. Utilizing the same Emergent

design, the researcher attempted to examine any themes that arose as a result of their high scores. Participating students focused upon a positive outlook on life, a belief in the existence of free-will, and the role that family and environment played in the development of their spirituality, as well as the level of social and emotional learning skills they possessed. They were visibly embarrassed speaking about their personal spirituality and often glanced at one another to measure reaction. In the absence of peer judgment, however, they seemingly spoke frankly and honestly about that which they believed in and that which they still found confusing.

<center>**Relating Findings to the Literature**</center>

Spiritual Well-Being and the Literature

There are areas of this research that are supported by previous studies regarding the relationship of spirituality to positive mental health and prosocialness. Many of them have been conducted in other countries, representing a diversity of cultures and beliefs which may intimate at a more global nature to these constructs. Abdei-Khalek's (2007) study of Muslim Kuwaiti adolescents examined the relationship between religiosity and mental health. Findings in that study indicated that the main predictor of religiosity was happiness for both males and females. In the country of Australia, Heaven and Ciarrochi (2007) examined the endorsement of religious values and dimensions of social and emotional well-being. Their results indicate significant associations with hope, joy, mindfulness, and acceptance. Canadian researchers Holder, Coleman, and Wallace (2008) concluded that spirituality was a significant predictor of happiness in their sample ($n = 320$) of 8 to 12 year old children.

Dew et al. (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 115 research articles and found that 92% of them provided evidence of a relationship between religiosity and better mental

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health. In the United States, Wong, Rew, and Slaikeu (2006) examined 20 studies across a seven-year period and found similar results. Ninety percent of the studies demonstrated a significant relationship between higher levels of religiosity/spirituality and better mental health in adolescents.

Seybold and Hill (2001) also conducted a meta-analysis of studies relating the impact of spirituality on mental health. They concluded that its impact is largely beneficial and the positive emotions engendered by this relationship can be associated with medical benefits, as well. Spiritual wellness was also linked to lower levels of depression in adolescents in separate studies conducted by Briggs and Shoffner (2006), and Cotton, Larkin, Hoopes, Cromer, and Rosenthal (2005).   Significantly, in both studies participants who indicated higher levels of meaning and purpose in life had lower levels of depression.

Furrow, King, and White (2004) found a positive relationship between religious self-understanding, personal meaning and prosocial personality. They posit that by virtue of the significant role that religion/spirituality tends to play in the rites of passage of our youth and its establishment as a factor in mental health, religion/spirituality should be considered a cogent source of developmental influence.

These studies affirm results obtained from this research and provide support for further studies regarding the impact of spirituality upon the development of healthy social and emotional learning skills. In the educational setting it is important to develop an awareness of the benefits of spiritual well-being as an intervening variable in students' social and emotional health.   Our charge as educators is to develop the next generation of citizens who must learn to thrive in a multicultural global environment. Learning to respect diverse

beliefs and to understand how those beliefs help to shape and form who we become should be an integral aspect of our educational systems.

The mere acceptance of student spirituality as a cogent factor in the acquisition of SEL skills would constitute a significant advancement in what may be regarded as a tentative step into unchartered territory. It may be premature to expect an educational response to this information, and certainly by virtue of the scant amount of research regarding student spirituality in existence this may be warranted; however, simply to acknowledge that student spirituality does impact SEL skills could become a precursor for professional dialogue and the opportunity to engage in further studies. This process must begin somewhere.

Social and Emotional Learning Skills and the Literature

A plethora of evidence exists linking healthy social and emotional learning (SEL) skills to academic achievement and positive affect in schools. Most of the research concerns two aspects of developing SEL skills: the individual development of students' skill set, or the need to enhance the structure of the learning environment to facilitate the climate for acquiring such skills.

In this study, students scoring highly demonstrated the most significant strengths in the areas of General Mood and Adaptability. The construct General Mood is defined by BarOn and Parker (1999) as related to optimism and happiness and includes an ability to enjoy life and recognize one's ability to influence personal happiness. Additionally, these individuals are characteristically able to maintain a positive and hopeful outlook towards life even in the midst of adversity. Adaptability comprises the ability to objectively differentiate between what we feel and what is real, and is related to perceptual clarity. It also involves the ability to adapt and adjust feelings, thinking, and behavior to accommodate different situations.

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Finally, adaptability is related to one's ability to identify and define problems in search of effective solutions and is therefore instrumental in effectively solving problems of a personal and interpersonal nature. These skills are important contributors to the development of positive social and emotional health. A number of studies in the literature review reflect the importance of developing these abilities.

Kun and Demetrovics (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of research articles related to the relationship between emotional intelligence and addictive disorders. Results of their analysis indicated that lower levels of emotional intelligence were related to intensive smoking, alcohol use, and illicit drug use. The two concepts that played a central role in the addictions were found to be the decoding and differentiating of emotions, and the regulation of emotions.

Two studies conducted by Tsaousis and Nikolaou (2005) examined whether emotional intelligence affected both the physical and psychological aspects of health functioning. Their findings supported this relationship and block entry hierarchical regression found the contribution of EI subscales (Perception and Appraisal, Control of Emotions, Use of Emotions, Understanding and Reasoning) to be statistically significant.

The ability to differentiate between real and perceived threats was an aspect of a study conducted by Blanchette and Richards (2010). They found that not only do individuals experiencing anxiety fixate and have difficulty attending, but that individuals experiencing anxiety develop more threatening interpretations of situations, are much more likely to expect negative outcomes, and avoid having to make decisions.

Reicher (2010) equates resilience in children with their ability to adapt successfully despite adverse conditions. Masten and Obradovic (2006) further defined the fundamental

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adaptive systems associated with resilience into nine categories, each with the potential to offer a significant contribution towards a child's ability to adapt and develop such resilience. An emphasis on the role that culture and societal systems play in the development of resilience is included. They indicated a further need for studies related to the regulatory or relational functions of the cultural systems embedded in religion and faith.

It should be noted that while the emphasis of this comparison between the results and the literature focused upon those scoring highly on the SWBS and EQi: YV instruments, there were areas related to low scoring participants, particularly those in the focus group, that resonated with negative outcomes related to social and emotional learning skills as depicted in the literature review. Students in the low scoring group were much more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors. Three out of the four students in the low-scoring group spoke of incidences related to stealing. Two out of the three students who were involved in stealing objects expressed guilt and regret for their actions and were still bothered by what they had done. The remaining student expressed remorse and anger for being caught in the act, but not for the act itself.

As previously noted, Bandura (2003) indicated that social modeling plays a role in the development of spirituality in human beings. He stated that our actions are a manifestation of our personal beliefs and that spirituality should be seen as socially grounded rather than just an intrinsic experience. It is certainly possible that results associated with the two groups could be connected to Bandura's theory related to social role modeling. The presence or absence of adult role models was not investigated, however, evidence suggesting that the influence of maturation and social peer group as an inhibitor of personal responses regarding

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beliefs did emerge during the focus group interviews and supported the work of Hay (2000) reported earlier.

These students, in contrast to the high-scoring group, did not speak of having a positive outlook on life, or a feeling that they were in control of their own destiny. References of that nature were absent from their conversations. This does not mean that they did not exist, but rather that they were not articulated during the interview. The majority expressed outcomes related to actual experiences or desires that influenced their views on spirituality, and impacted the level of their personal desire to acquire social and emotional learning skills. Whether their attitude was one of false bravado because of discomfort with the topic, or an actual representation of beliefs, this group was more focused on their individual needs and desires than the high-scoring group.

In comparison to Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development, students in the low-scoring group may have vacillated between Preconvention Moral Reasoning with its emphasis on avoiding punishment and a personal reward orientation, and Conventional Moral Reasoning with stress upon the need to follow established rules. The higher-scoring group displayed more of the traits associated with Postconventional Moral Reasoning during their focus group session. Their discussions were much more philosophical and involved the exercise of free will and the importance of treating others with respect. They acknowledged the role of both family and the surrounding environment in shaping their personal beliefs. The higher scoring group did not give an indication that they felt constrained by their spirituality. The positive words they spoke, as well as their emphasis on free will, gave this researcher the impression that they felt spirituality to be a liberating force in their lives, rather than a restrictive one.

Conclusions

It is important to recognize the sheer value of acknowledging a link between the happiness and resilience of children and their personal sense of spirituality. Objectively speaking, the data indicate that this is so. Realistically, this information is not a source of comfort for educators; however, the evidence should not be negated because the topic is politically charged, or culturally taboo. There should be no shame, or embarrassment, associated with a child's natural expression of his or her personal beliefs. Neither should we suppress the yearning for answers, or challenging viewpoints that may arise as a result of honest inquiry. These existential struggles give rise to critical thinking skills and help to mold and shape the character of our youth.

The results of this study concur with many studies that have been previously undertaken; however, a shift in cultural norms will be necessary before an opportunity will arise to operationalize these findings into educational pedagogy related to the development of social and emotional learning skills in students. If it were not so, then existing information would have been readily located in social service and educational journals. The fact that it was not belies the fears of a nation so intent upon graciously protecting individual rights as to negate a potentially powerful asset for a majority of our youth. It may take many years for such polarized viewpoints to seek common ground in this regard, especially if researchers and educators are reluctant to broach this topic.

Implications for Education

Implications Related to Spiritual Intelligence

For many years, the field of medicine has recognized the relationship between psychological and spiritual states of being, and improved health outcomes (Hammermeister

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& Peterson, 2001). Research information abounds in nursing and medical journals, attesting

to the fact that individuals with a strong faith base and optimistic outlook on life are more

likely to recover, or have a positive outcome (Cotton, Zebracki, Rosenthal, Tsevat, & Drotar,

2006). As a result, hospitals have hired professionals and developed programs specifically

designed to enhance the psychological and spiritual well-being of patients (Taylor, 2007).

They recognized the need to embrace a philosophy quite contrary to an antiquated belief that

a patient's life or death could be solely attributed to the skill of the attending physician.

Medical experts have long since humbled themselves to recognize that there are intervening

variables in addition to their abilities as practitioners that have a direct impact upon future

patient health (Medrum, 2011).

Educators generally rely upon the skill of the classroom teacher and a quality

curriculum to predict success. It would be ludicrous to state that these are not primary

factors leading towards success. However, it is equally naïve to assume that under the best of

circumstances a child in distress, or lacking in self-confidence, will be able access his or her

education in the same way as one who is not, no matter how exemplary the curriculum.   It is

time for educators to respect this knowledge in pedagogy and practice.

If, as the data from this and other studies suggests, spirituality has an impact upon a

child's happiness and the ability to overcome adversity it represents a most significant

contribution to the health and well-being of our children. Students who are happier, possess

a strong belief in their future, and can overcome obstacles, will be much more likely to

experience have a positive school experience. Raising awareness of spiritual intelligence as a

possible cogent factor in a child's life should signal a higher level of concern for the whole

child, and is not incongruous with obtaining the skills essential for living in a diverse global environment.

Once publicly acknowledged, however, the dilemma will be in navigating a response. The desire to avoid professional, or political, backlash does not make the data less salient, but is certainly a major factor mitigating its exposure. Denying its existence, however, will not allow for the further dialogue, debate, and research necessary to mainstream such a controversial topic. The desire to fully explore a critical component of our human existence previously ignored in research will have to outweigh professional trepidation, once again (Jones, 2005). As previously indicated, what we study and how we operationalize the results into practice have a tremendous influence on peoples' lives (Bandura, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Nord, 2005).

It is indeed a quagmire, however, not unprecedented. Politically and socially taboo topics such as sex education, AIDS, and respect for alternative lifestyles have permeated public consciousness in recent years. Over time and with much strong debate, curricula and policies have been developed to address these issues. A proactive concept that has the potential to enhance social and emotional stability in students should not represent a subject too intimidating to investigate (DeBlasio, 2011).

Implications Related to Social and Emotional Learning Skills

Educators and policymakers need to comprehend the fact that social and emotional learning (SEL) skills fuel the desire to learn and provide a healthy foundation for student engagement in school. Teacher preparation programs should include a greater emphasis on the psychology of learning and ways to integrate SEL into everyday curriculum. Students should not be prevented from engaging in Socratic discussions related to spirituality,

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especially as regards to how their personal beliefs are manifested in the choices they make. Requiring students to develop skills of introspection and self-reflection will foster a greater consciousness and elevate the capacity of a future generation to deal with complexities and embrace differences.

We do a disservice to our youth when we pretend that the level of their social and emotional learning skills is not of primary concern to us, or that we don't have time to address those issues. The greatest gift we can offer to a struggling student is to instill the belief that he or she is truly capable of experiencing success and possesses the skill and determination necessary to overcome obstacles. Every successful opportunity we provide for a student, no matter how insignificant it may appear, helps to strengthen this foundation. Raising the awareness of parents, educators, policymakers, and students, should be a priority. Combining healthy SEL and a high quality curriculum has the potential to produce tremendous academic results and enhance the social skills necessary for success in life.

Implications for Future Research

Research in the area of the spiritual intelligence of children is extremely limited (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003; King & Boyatzis, 2004). Research examining a possible correlation between spiritual intelligence and the SEL skills of urban public school students did not heretofore exist. In the large scheme of the field of social sciences, this area of inquiry is still in its infancy. There are several reasons why this researcher believes that further studies of this nature should take place.

In the process of preparing to conduct this study several people were want to advise me of the inherent pitfalls in this research. One major concern was the ability to isolate the variable "spirituality" as separate from the influence of particular faith, family, and culture.

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It was never my intention to do so; in fact this researcher feels that such an endeavor would be an exercise in futility. As human beings, we are all an amalgamation of that which we believe to be true, the influence of those who are dear to us, and the community in which we live. The fabric of our lives can be woven from rough or silken threads, but many hands go into the making. It is what makes each one of us so unique. The point is, however, that the same can be said for all studies related to the social sciences. The ability to isolate a psychosocial variable from all of the influences affecting its evolution is inconceivable. For example, if another researcher decided to study variables contributing towards self-efficacy, how can they determine with certainty that level of spirituality is not an intervening variable in the development of self-efficacy if that possibility is never even entertained?

The fact that the topic of religion and spirituality raises such passionate discourse should signal its import and impact on peoples' lives, yet few studies incorporate this component into research and therefore exclude any possible connection to such in the results. Since, once again, we rely on valid research to direct policy and procedures this cycle of omission prevents us from obtaining a comprehensive understanding of our humanity and can lead to inadequate responses.

There are too many questions that have not been asked in an effort to remain politically correct. In the end, we are left with inconclusive knowledge that perpetuates assumptions regarding human behavior without taking into consideration what the data suggests is, and has been, a major variable throughout the course of history.

There are also inherent dangers associated with not understanding peoples' spirituality, or understanding the process through which spirituality may become consumed within codified interpretations. When we fail to comprehend the propensity for violence that

overzealous beliefs may engender, our society is vulnerable to harmful acts. If this process is

carefully studied and a measurement for progression is developed perhaps future problematic

areas can be anticipated. At the very least, efforts to learn about and open dialogue within

faith traditions at school may alleviate some of the prejudice born of fear and

misinterpretation that exists within our contemporary society. It is riskier to ignore that

which is incomprehensible than to research and gain insight into patterns of behavior.

Further studies need to examine the interdependent nature of the constructs

spirituality and religiosity. The fact that there is confusion around these constructs became

apparent while conducting the literature review for this research. The terms are often used

synonymously, however, there are a vast number of people who may consider themselves

"spiritual," but not "religious," and dare it be stated that there are people who consider

themselves "religious," who may not be "spiritual." Careful delineation of these constructs

may remove some of the stigma associated with engaging in this type of research in the

future.

Instrumentation remains an issue for further research, as well. It was extremely

difficult to locate a spirituality instrument without a denominational bias. Finding an

instrument of such nature that would also be suitable for use with children was especially

challenging. Even the instrument specifically designed for younger students, The BarOn

Eqi:YV, presented some unanticipated issues. The experience of this researcher was that

younger participants had difficulty adjusting their schema for scoring when they were forced

to switch back and forth repeatedly between negatively and positively worded statements.

An inconsistency index provided by the author allowed for the elimination of cases subject to

such responses, but it is important to know what can and should be expected of students prior to assessment.

In conclusion, vast amounts of money and energy are spent conducting studies that many would claim to be frivolous, or irrelevant. But we do it anyway, because the curious nature of our existence is such that we are ever searching for the answers to life's most mysterious and perplexing questions. What is truly amazing is that among this healthy thirst for knowledge lies a field of study so powerfully controversial that it remains virtually untouched, despite its tremendous influence upon the history of mankind.

We do not know the potential of spiritual intelligence. Perhaps we never will. It is possible that there are dimensions of faith that will never be fully understood, but that doesn't mean educators and researchers should avoid grappling with those issues. The struggle to comprehend and to fulfill a purpose is deeply rooted in each one of us. What if our neglect to develop this intelligence prevents students from becoming what they were truly meant to be, or from developing a gift to its fullest potential?   Our preconceived notions of success are evaluative judgments that are fine for some, but not for all. Research in this area may be the "saving grace" for many young people who are confused and searching for their identity in ways that are destructive rather than productive. It is certainly worth the effort.

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Appendix A: Cover Letter and Consent Form (Superintendent)

September 29, 2010

Dear :_____,

I am requesting permission to complete my dissertation research within the district. Three years ago the _____ Board of Education approved my enrollment in a Ed.D Educational Leadership Program at Western Connecticut State University. The proposal for this study has been successfully defended and approved through the Institutional Review Board (IRB consent number 1011-64) process.

My passion and expertise exists in the area of developing students' social and emotional learning skills. The success I have experienced in the classroom is a direct result of developing my own professional skills as well as building capacity in my students. The two are inextricably linked. I have discovered that it is not enough for me to have confidence in my own abilities. It is equally and vitally important for students to experience success and develop their own sense of self-confidence in order to build the stamina to persevere and achieve academically.

The study I plan to complete will research one variable that may contribute to the emotional intelligence of students. The primary focus would be to conduct a mixed-method study examining the relationship between students' level of spiritual intelligence and their level of social and emotional learning skills.

The following criteria will be met:

- **This study is causal comparative. It will not require a treatment, or an experimental group.**
- **Two focus groups (5 students in each) will be interviewed one time to provide more information regarding responses on the surveys.**
- **Two self-report instruments will be used. One will assess a student's level of social and emotional learning. The second will assess the degree to which a student feels that his or her spirituality helps to guide the choices they make. The questions associated with this instrument are answered on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree and include such statements as, "I feel good about my future," "I believe that God loves me and cares about me," and "I don't have a personally satisfying relationship with God." There is no mention of religious denomination, nor is there a religious affiliation associated with the instrument. It is intended to be used with children from all different belief systems.**

- **The study will be conducted on a totally voluntary and confidential basis. Parent consent and student assent will be obtained prior to completion of the two brief surveys.**
- **A written summary of the results will be provided to the district upon completion of the study.**

_____ is a city that celebrates diversity and is rich in faith-based communities. This district has always demonstrated the courage to be inclusive rather than exclusionary when it comes to honoring the traditions of faith. The more we begin to understand the underlying factors which mold and shape our youth, the greater our propensity to produce happy, healthy, and well-educated future citizens.

I sincerely request that my proposal is given due consideration before December 23rd, 2010, and I am either granted permission to conduct this research without reservation, or given the opportunity to clarify further questions. My main goal, as always, is to be of benefit to the children.

Thank you for your consideration,

Gail DeBlasio
5th and 6th Grade Team Leader

Gail DeBlasio, an employee of _____ Schools, is hereby granted permission

to conduct her doctoral research within the district during the 2010/2011 school year.

Signed,_____Date_____
Assistant Superintendent of Schools

Appendix B: Cover Letter and Consent Form (Principal)

November 21, 2010

Dear _____,

I am requesting permission to conduct research at Davis Street Arts and Academic Magnet School. Three years ago the _____ Board of Education approved my enrollment in an Ed.D Educational Leadership Program at Western Connecticut State University. I have fulfilled all of the prerequisite requirements for doctoral research and have received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB consent number 1011-64) to conduct my study.

As you know, my passion and expertise has always been in the area of developing students' social and emotional learning skills. The success I have experienced in the classroom is a direct result of developing my own professional skills as well as building capacity in my students.

The study I plan to complete will research one variable that may contribute to the emotional intelligence of students. The primary focus would be to conduct a mixed-method study examining the relationship between students' level of spiritual intelligence and their level of social and emotional learning skills.

The following criteria will be met:

- **The quantitative design of the study is causal comparative. It will not require a treatment, or an experimental group.**
- **Two focus groups (5 students in each) will be interviewed one time to provide more information regarding responses on the surveys.**
- **Two self-report instruments will be used. One will assess a student's level of social and emotional learning. The second will assess the degree to which a student feels that his or her spirituality helps to guide the choices they make. The questions associated with this instrument are answered on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree and include such statements as, "I feel good about my future," "I believe that God loves me and cares about me," and "I don't have a personally satisfying relationship with God." There is no mention of religious denomination, nor is there a religious affiliation associated with the instrument. It is intended to be used with children from all different belief systems.**
- **The study will be conducted on a totally voluntary and confidential basis. Parent consent and student assent will be obtained prior to completion of the two brief surveys.**
- **A written summary of the results will be provided to you upon completion of the study.**

New Haven is a city that celebrates diversity and is rich in faith-based communities. Our school has always demonstrated the courage to be inclusive rather than exclusionary when it comes to honoring the traditions of faith and diverse perspectives. The more we begin to understand the underlying factors which mold and shape our youth, the greater our propensity to produce happy, healthy, and well-educated future citizens.

I sincerely request that my research proposal is given due consideration and that I am either granted permission to conduct this research without hesitation, or given the opportunity to clarify further questions or concerns. My main goal, as always, is to be of benefit to the children.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your prompt response.

Gail DeBlasio
5th and 6th Grade Team Leader

_____

Gail DeBlasio has permission to conduct her doctoral research at _____ during the 2010/2011 school year.

Signed:_____Date_____

Appendix C: Cover Letter and Consent Form (Parents/Students)

December 1, 2010

Dear Parents,

My name is Gail DeBlasio and I have been a teacher at ------------------------------------- School for almost 20 years. During this time I have taught grades 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Over the years it has been my pleasure to educate many of your children and watch them grow into young adults. They have taught me so much, as well. I learned that children need teachers who can not only instruct them, but can inspire them to believe in themselves and provide the opportunity to learn in a classroom that places as much value on developing a sense of community as it does academic growth.

Many of you are aware of the fact that I am enrolled in a doctoral program and ready to begin the research for my dissertation process. My passion has always been to build awareness among teachers and administrators regarding the necessity to view children through a more holistic lens. This view recognizes that building the capacity to increase student self-confidence and nurturing a supportive classroom community will help to provide optimum learning conditions that will enable greater academic achievement and success in life.

To that end, I would like to research one particular variable that may be a contributing factor in a child's ability to develop social and emotional learning skills. I am referring to *spiritual intelligence*. Please understand that in the context of my study spiritual intelligence has nothing to do with religious sectarianism, or any particular denomination of faith. I am a firm believer in the separation of church and state and the need to be respectful of individual belief systems. It has been my experience, however, that students bring all of who they are into the classroom and that many of the choices they make are rooted in family upbringing and/or faith-based traditions.   In this study, spiritual intelligence will refer to the inner sense of direction that children rely upon when they face moral or ethical dilemmas and also their sense of connectedness to the world in which they live.

This research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB consent number 1011-64), which is the organization responsible for ensuring that the safety and well-being of participants in research studies will be protected, as well as district administration. It will require participating students to complete two brief surveys that would take a total of approximately 40 minutes to finish. One survey would measure how students' perceive their own spiritual intelligence. **The questions associated with this survey are answered on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree and include such statements as, "I feel good about my future," "I believe that God loves me and cares about me," and "I don't**

have a personally satisfying relationship with God." The other survey would measure how students perceive their own emotional intelligence. In grades 3 and 4 the questions will be read to students orally. In grades 5, 6, and 7, students will complete the surveys independently. The data will then be analyzed to see if there is a relationship between the students' sense of spiritual intelligence and their corresponding level of social and emotional learning skills. Afterwards, several students will be asked to participate in a discussion group and offer further input regarding the questions on the survey. All of the information will be kept completely confidential.

In order to take part in this study parental consent is required and students must voluntarily agree to participate. It is hoped that parents will see the value in this research and recognize the need for educators to learn more about what it takes to nurture students' success academically and in life.

I look forward to receiving your response before (TBD), or seeing you in-person at the informational meeting being held for those of you who may have further questions to ask, on (TBD). Please feel free to contact me by email with any of your concerns, as well.

Sincerely,

Gail DeBlasio
_____School
(Email address included)

PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE

IN

MRS. DEBLASIO'S DOCTORAL RESEARCH

Student name:_____Grade Level:___Age:___

Homeroom teacher:_____Room #: _____

I hereby give permission for my child_____

to participate in Mrs. DeBlasio's doctoral study regarding the effect

spiritual intelligence may have upon students' social and emotional

learning skills.

Signature:_____Date:_____

                     (Parent/Guardian)

Student Assent

I would like to participate in this study. I understand that I can

choose not to answer all of the questions and that I may withdraw

from this study at anytime.

Student Signature:_____Date_____

Appendix D: Condensed Permission Slip

March 4, 2011

Dear Parents,

I have received numerous requests from students for second permission slips to participate in my dissertation research. I need to order the surveys by the end of next week, so it would be helpful for me to obtain a final count by Wednesday, March 9th.

If you did not receive the original invitation, my interest is in understanding factors associated with the development of student social and emotional learning skills. Researchers have determined that there is a positive correlation between social and emotional learning skills and academic achievement. This study will examine correlations between how students feel about their spiritual intelligence and their level of social and emotional learning skills (emotional intelligence). It will ask the question: Does student spirituality have an impact upon the daily choices that are made, or the way they feel about themselves and other classmates?

Students will <u>anonymously</u> complete two brief surveys. It is hoped that parents will see the value in this research and recognize the need for educators to learn more about what it takes to nurture students' success both academically and socially.

<div align="center">

Sincerely,

Gail DeBlasio
5th Grade Teacher
School
(email address included)

</div>

_____

Student name:_____Grade Level:___Age:___

Homeroom teacher:_____ Room #: _____

I do grant permission for my child to participate:_____
I do not grant permission for my child to participate:_____

Parent
Signature:_____Date_____

Student Agreement Signature:

_____Date_____

Please return to homeroom teacher, or Mrs. DeBlasio, by Wednesday, March 9th, 2011.

Appendix E: Instructional Script

Boys and Girls, thank you for agreeing to help me out with my doctoral research. Today you will be completing two surveys that will ask you to answer personal questions regarding how you feel about yourself, how you act in certain situations and your relationship with God. Please know that your responses will be held in the strictest of confidence and you should feel free to respond in a manner that truly reflects what you believe. If at any point you feel uncomfortable answering a particular question you may choose not to respond to that question and leave it blank. If you no longer feel comfortable participating in this study you may raise your hand at any time and ask to be excused, or simply turn your paper over and put your pencil down. This will signal us that you have decided to withdraw from the study.

Please direct your attention to the whiteboard. On it you will see a copy of the two scales we will use to respond to the statements on the surveys. I will review each scale with you before we complete the survey. Some of the statements you will respond to are worded positively. For example the statement, "I make friends easily," is worded positively and is asking you to assess whether this statement is very seldom true, seldom true, often true, or very often true for you. Please respond in a manner that accurately reflects the way things really are and don't worry about selecting a response based on what you think a grown-up might expect of you. What is most important is that your response reflects what is true for you.

Some of the statements will be worded negatively. The sentence, "I don't enjoy much about life," is worded negatively and special care will have to be taken to respond to these types of questions accurately. In this survey your choices will range from strongly

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agree to strongly disagree and you will have to select the statement that best fits how you really feel. If you select "strongly agree" then you are stating that you definitely don't enjoy much about life. If you select strongly disagree you are indicating that this statement is not at all true for you and you very much enjoy life. Please be careful to realize that you will be switching back and forth from negatively written statements to positively written statements so that you will not become confused as you respond.

Students in grades 3, 4, or with a DRA score of lower than 50

I will be reading each line of the survey to you and pausing to give you enough time to respond. Please do not take too long to select an answer and try to go with your first instinct, or choice. Before we begin the survey I will review the answer scale that is on the whiteboard. If you have any further questions after the review, feel free to raise your hand and ask them. Remember, this is not a graded assignment and your personal responses will not be shared with anyone else in this school, so feel comfortable to choose the answer that best suits you.

Students in grades 5, 6, and 7

You will be completing these surveys independently, but before we begin I will review the answer scales that are on the whiteboard. If you have any further questions after the review, feel free to raise your hand and ask them at that time. Once you begin, read each statement carefully and decide which response is the best one for you. Please do not take too long to select an answer and try to go with your first instinct, or choice. Remember, this is not a graded assignment and your personal responses will be kept strictly confidential, so feel comfortable to respond in a way that reflects what you truly believe.

Appendix F: Qualitative Guiding Questions

Questions Guiding the Focus Group Interviews:

1. Were there any questions on the two surveys you completed that you would like to talk a little bit more about, or were there questions that you thought should have been on the surveys that were not asked of you?

2. Do your personal beliefs impact the way you feel about yourself and others, or the way that you treat people?

3. Is there anything related to your personal faith or beliefs that you would like to share?